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STORIES OF AUTHORS' LOVES

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Published November, 1902

Electrotyped and Printed by
J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, U. S. A.

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TO
MY MOTHER

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FOREWORD

INTEREST in the heart affairs of men and women who wrote is an easily understandable curiosity. In large part, they created the traditions of romance, those men and women ; their written ideals of love have set the standard for the majority, have sent young blood (and ofttimes blood not so young) coursing through veins in a swifter current ; have filled young hearts (and ofttimes hearts not so young) with beating desire to love, to be loved, to bear and forbear, give and forgive in love's name. It is only natural that these young hearts and hearts that once were young should wish to know in what manner those men and women realized their own ideals.

But it is not merely because they

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wrote that we wish them to bear witness, but because they were human wayfarers like ourselves, and we want to know what befell them on the world's thoroughfare.

There are two matters which are of supreme importance to us all,—the Life that is to come, which is Love Everlasting, and that touchstone of this present life which shall enable us to know its gold from base alloy. Concerning that which is Beyond the journey's end, none may return to tell us ; in vain have we worn out our sad hearts in wistfulness that some voice that is stilled might speak, just once again, to say that all is well ; that some vanished hand might beckon to us out of the shadows at the cross-roads, showing us which is the way that leads to Peace. But touching all that is to be, there is only silence ; and by the roadside are gaunt sign-posts pointing, "This way to wealth," "This way to fame," but nothing tells the

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bewildered traveller on which road lies Happiness.

Then, as one lost in the woods tries to remember fragments of woodcraft he has heard from the lips of those who knew,—tries, desperately, to recollect whether it is on the north side of tree-trunks that one always finds moss or that one never finds it,—so we rack our brains, ofttimes, as we approach a fork in the highway, and try to recall the travellers' tales we've heard,—of one who took the road to Fame and found along it naught but Dead Sea fruit, and of one who followed a path marked Sacrifice and came to a gate marked Paradise.

Nor is the way all, our recollection bids us know, for on all roads some have met disaster, and by all roads some have come to their hearts' desire. It is the touchstone that counts! If gold always lay in shining nuggets, if iron pyrites were not yellow and lus-

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trous, then were a touchstone unnecessary. But many an one has bartered his soul for fool's gold; and many an one, for want of a touchstone, has skirted with the leaden feet of discouragement a mountain whose heart might buy an empire.

It is because their touchstones, their ideals and standards, have become, in large part, our touchstones, our ideals and standards, that we have so great curiosity to know what befell those men and women who wrote. In this spirit, and in this spirit only, are we pardonable for inquiring into their sacredest relations. Yet, after all has been said about what things in a man's or woman's life should be sacred, inviolate, a man no more lives to himself alone in his sacredest relations than in his commoner trafficking with the world of his kind. If there is a line beyond which the *noblesse oblige* of the transfigured spirit fails to hold good, he would be a bold

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man indeed who should attempt to name it. The Lord of Life when He went up to be transfigured took with Him three witnesses who should describe to the world His glory; and prefiguring His death, He said of the Divine philosophy of the Atonement, "And I, if I be lifted up from earth, will draw all men unto me." Neither in the exaltation of Transfiguration Mount nor in the sublimely piteous lifting-up on Calvary did He fail to remember that all men, after Him, would raise rejoicing or desponding eyes from their manifold experiences, to question their import in the Divine parallel. On what ground, then, shall they for whom all that He did was suffered and done, refuse to let their lives bear witness? Nay, a hoarded happiness is a talent in a napkin which shall not escape the censure of the Steward on That Day. And as for our unhappinesses! Why, they are, or ought to be, the shipwrecks that make certain rocks forever menacing to mari-

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ners, our sighs the wailing bell-buoys that warn away from danger spots.

In this spirit has the author of these volumes come, reverently and very humbly, to each of the subjects of these love-stories. Let it be said, at first, that the series was never planned; it grew. Beginning with a random request for "an article," followed by a suggestion that more be written, the little "stories," begun with no smallest thought of a series, much less a book, were continued from time to time, as kindly folk showed them favor, until they had been a bi-monthly feature of the *Delineator* for nearly three years. If there is anything in them of worth, the writer hopes that very much of it may be attributed to the gentleman whose warm sympathy and infinitely delicate kindness has, more than all else, made the writing of them an unalloyed pleasure,—Mr. Charles Dwyer, editor of the *Delineator*.

Thanks are also due him for the use

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of the originals of a number of the portraits; to many others for courtesies assisting in the book's illustration; to Messrs. Downey & Co., London; to Messrs. Harper & Brothers, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., G. P. Putnam's Sons, Dodd, Mead & Co., for permission to use copyrighted portraits; to Messrs. Edmund Clarence Stedman, Julian Hawthorne, Samuel Bancroft, Jr., and Brander Matthews, for permission to use rare portraits in their possession.

Finally, let it be said in pre-defence, that it is not likely any one can be more keenly conscious of the book's shortcomings than is the author. There are a hundred omissions of fine subjects, which no one can regret to miss so much as the author regrets to have them missing. But ten volumes would not hold them all, much less two. Touching the little handful of stories that *are* here, it can only be said that no stone has been left unturned to make

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them *faithful*, true to facts, as best the writer could sift evidence and find them, and true to the *spirit* of each of the mighty ones herein described. It is a serious responsibility to put in circulation, however slight, an estimate of a great spirit; a grave situation, to sit in self-constituted judgment on the earth's elect. Only let it be said here, that the writer has not been unmindful of this, and what errors she may have made should be set down to the limitations of her wisdom, not to lack of good will.

C. E. L.

September, 1902.

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THE PEACE THAT CAME TO TENNYSON

TO be a wife, a real, true wife, to any man—his eternally fore-ordained soul's complement—is a mission calling for the most love inspired and alertly intelligent gifts and graces vouchsafed to woman. Nothing, not even motherhood, gives her so supreme opportunity. A mother may be all wisdom and all devotion to a child whose temperament and tendencies are distinctly, and by Divine right, opposed to her own in nearly every particular; there is no law of love requiring her to be the soul's complement to each of her offspring or to any of them. Somewhere, to be revealed perhaps by time, perchance not until eternity, that mate exists for each of them; it is hers only to

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do what she may to make them meet for that union when it comes. But to the father of her children she owes more ; to him she is either the one woman in all the world who is best for him in every sense, in every need, or she is no wife at all. Of course, the converse is true ; but of the qualities that go farthest towards making marriage a perfect union, God gave the more to woman ; hers the supream capabilities of all the self-sacrifice involved in the mighty undertaking of fusing two in one, and hers being the greater gift, why, *noblesse oblige* ! hers the greater opportunity.

All this being true of the wife of any man, it is twice true of the wife of a man of genius ; perhaps it is no wonder so many women have failed in this undertaking, when one comes to think of all it entails. But as example is better than precept, and particularization than generalization, here is the story of a great poet by way of illustration :

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Alfred Tennyson was always a more or less saturnine individual. "Grand, gloomy, and peculiar," the phrase coined for Napoleon Bonaparte, seems even better fitted to the late Laureate of England. Whereas the disposition of his great contemporary, Browning, was singularly social and sunny and capable of adaptation to the commonplace, that of Tennyson was unsocial and predisposed to melancholy. "I require quiet, and myself to myself, more than any man when I write," he told Miss Sellwood (afterwards his wife) in one of his early letters to her, doubtless in defense of some of his social shortcomings; and in the long, silent stretches, when the thought-seeds were germinating in the poet soul, Tennyson seemed to require quiet and "himself to himself" no less than when in the actual labor of transcribing. Even in his companionships he was prone to choose men who talked little, or, at least, men who knew how,

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at times, to maintain a companionable silence. It is recorded of Carlyle and Tennyson that they once sat through a whole long evening, until midnight, or past it, in the Carlyle house in Cheyne Row, without uttering a single word—just smoking, smoking, and feeling a vast content, no doubt, in the knowledge that if either of them cared to speak he would have an intelligent listener. And Tennyson's love of silence, or his aversion to communication, extended even to correspondence, so that when he did write, his letters were mere good-natured growls of whimsical apology. Rapt in the wondrous maze of his own reveries, seeing visions, dreaming dreams, or terribly intent on observation (a faculty developed in him to the utmost), he simply didn't want to be bothered ; that was all !

One spring day in 1830, when Alfred Tennyson, yet a student at Cambridge, albeit with three published volumes of

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poems to his credit, was home at Somersby Rectory for a vacation, the Sellwoods, a neighboring family, drove over from Horncastle to call on the Tennysons. Alfred the solitary was out somewhere, roving about in his own good company, and his friend Arthur Hallam (he to whom, later, "In Memoriam" was dedicated, in lament for whose untimely taking-off it was written) did the honors of the house where he was such a dear and frequent guest, by asking Miss Emily Sellwood to walk with him in the Fairy Wood close by the Rectory. At a turn of the path they came upon Alfred, "who," says his son, "at sight of the slender, beautiful girl of seventeen, in her simple gray dress, moving 'like a light across those woodland ways,' suddenly said to her, 'Are you a Dryad or an Oread wandering here?'" That was his first glimpse of her who was to be the one perfect woman to him forever after—there in the lovely Fairy Wood,

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with the flickering afternoon sunlight playing down upon her through the tender leafage of early spring, so that she seemed to his poet's fancy a thing ethereal added by magic to the beauties of the vernal wood.

Six years later, when his brother Charles married Miss Louisa Sellwood, youngest sister of Miss Emily, and Alfred, as groomsman, walked into church with Miss Emily as bridesmaid, something of the poetic attraction the slender slip of a seventeen-year-old girl had for the young under-graduate not yet quite turned of his majority seems to have returned at sight of the lovely bridesmaid dropping tears by his side, for to her, soon afterwards, he wrote his sonnet, "The Bridesmaid :"

"O bridesmaid, ere the happy knot was tied,
Thine eyes so wept that they could hardly see ;
Thy sister smiled and said, ' No tears for me !
A happy bridesmaid makes a happy bride.'
And then, the couple standing side by side,

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Love lighted down between them full of glee,
And over his left shoulder laughed at thee,
'O happy bridesmaid, make a happy bride.'
And all at once a pleasant truth I learned,
For while the tender service made thee weep,
I loved thee for the tear thou couldst not hide,
And prest thy hand, and knew the press re-
turned,
And thought, 'My life is sick of single sleep;
O happy bridesmaid, make a happy bride!' "

But not yet did this wish of his come true, although soon afterwards an engagement existed between them and an ardent correspondence began, Alfred having now moved up to the vicinity of London, with his widowed mother and the younger brothers and sisters of the family. During these years he was working steadily, doing some of his greatest work, but publishing not at all—biding his time in quiet, preparing to take his place, with the publication of his volume of 1842, with the leading men of letters of his time. But although he was giving his life, all his energies, to

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poetry, even to the sacrifice of friendly enjoyments and ordinary family sociability, poetry was not as yet paying him anything in return, and he was sore vexed by a great and ever-present lack of pence. He had enough for subsistence, but not enough for luxuries of any sort, often not even enough for a short journey he dearly desired, and certainly not enough, hardly in remotest prospect, to marry on. So after two or three years of waiting and working, the engagement to Miss Sellwood was broken off, by wish of her family, and all intercourse ceased between them, by order of those too interested in her welfare to allow her to frivol away her youth and love on a man who, so far as discernible results might testify, had apparently accomplished not a single thing in nigh on ten long years.

So the silent, taciturn Tennyson, shut off from the companionship and intercourse he loved most, shut himself off

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from all other, and during the next few years the cessation of correspondence between him and his most intimate friends was so complete that in writing the story of his father's life, Hallam Tennyson, to cover this period, had to get survivors of his illustrious father to rack their memories for some impressions of him during those years, what he was about, where he went, and how he seemed to his friends.

With the publication of the 1842 volume, however, Tennyson was justified. It contained, as has been said, some of Tennyson's greatest work, some that he never surpassed, and placed him at once in the forefront of English poetry.

About this time Carlyle, writing to Emerson about him, described him thus :

“ One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusky, dark hair ; bright, laughing, hazel eyes ; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate ; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian looking, clothes cynically

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loose, free-and-easy, smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between ; speech and speculation free and plenteous ; I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe."

Carlyle is constrained to say, however, that he does not enjoy a great deal of Tennyson's society :

"He often skips me, in these brief visits to town ; skips everybody, indeed ; being a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom, carrying a bit of chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into cosmos."

So pronounced, for a matter of fact, were Tennyson's tendencies to gloom, in those years, that he must needs be almost constantly treating for hypochondria, usually with the hydropathic treatment, and his friends were often seriously alarmed for the safety of his mind. The death of Hallam had greatly undone him, and the forces of the man's own

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giant mind working, working, working so constantly, in such concentration, with so little recreative divergence of interest, came nigh to self-destruction. Moreover, with his anxiety to marry, he had invested his little all in a business enterprise of a family friend, who inspired Tennyson with so great enthusiasm for his scheme that the unworldly-wise poet sold his little estate in Lincolnshire and added to the proceeds even the five hundred pounds left him as a legacy by Arthur Hallam's aunt, to further the industry, which proved an ignominious failure, swallowing his all and returning him nothing. His distress after this failure was so great that his life was actually despaired of. "I have drunk," he writes, "one of those most bitter draughts out of the cup of life, which go near to make men hate the world they move in." But in 1845, soon after this crushing disappointment, Tennyson had a stroke of exceedingly good fortune, earned by the

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uniformly admitted merit of his 1842 volume, in the grant of a life pension of two hundred pounds a year, secured from the Crown by the good offices of Lord Houghton. Honors were plenty in those days, too, and life looked not quite so bleak to Tennyson. However, in 1847, the year of the publication of "The Princess," the poet was again under cure for his melancholia and general ill-health, and among his letters we find him writing from the sanitarium at Umberslade :

"They tell me not to read, not to think ; but they might as well tell me not to live. I lack something of the woman's long-enduring patience in these matters. It is a terribly long process, but then what price is too high for health, and health of mind is so involved with health of body."

And again from the same place :

"At this moment my own family do not know where I am : I have not written home, nor shall write I dare say for some time ; to be sure, I am

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not at any time much in the habit of writing home, and so my people know my ways and forgive them.”

If his growing fame gave him any great happiness, in these years, there is no evidence of it in his letters or journals, or in the letters of his friends. He was restless, constantly moving from place to place, meeting many of the celebrities of his time, maintaining friendship with a few of them, but on the whole, as Carlyle said of him, “a man solitary and sad, . . . dwelling in an element of gloom,” smoking “infinite tobacco” and writing, writing with infinite labor—thinking wonderful thoughts, though, for those were the years when he was working on “In Memoriam,” sounding the depths and scaling the heights of the greatest requiem ever sung, the most comforting poem, perhaps, ever written since the shepherd-king of Israel, the man of many sorrows, wrote “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”

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All these years Tennyson held no communication with the one person whose approval meant more to him than all else. But one thinks it was to her he wrote the lines in "The Princess :"

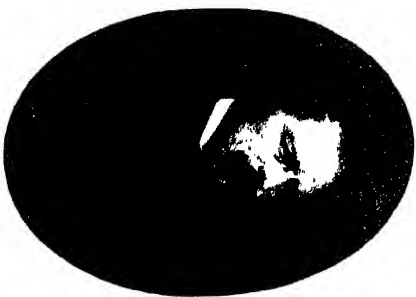
"To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they win her ; for indeed I know
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought and amiable words,
And courtliness and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man."

At any rate, he kept high faith with his "maiden passion," and so, to her everlasting honor and glory, did Emily Sellwood keep faith with hers. In 1850 the poet and his lady met at the home of a mutual friend, after ten years of separation. He was past forty then, and she, the "Dryad or Oread" of Fairy Wood, was a quiet, delicate, spirituelle



SHIPLAKE CHURCH

From a photograph especially taken



LORD AND LADY HENNYSON



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woman of seven-and-thirty, frail in body, with the great repose of one who has suffered much and over much been triumphant.

At this time "In Memoriam" was ready for the press, and the publisher had promised Tennyson a small yearly royalty on it and his other poems, which, with his Crown grant and a few other small moneys, made the poor poet feel, at last, that he could honorably offer Miss Sellwood a home. It was all very quietly and very quickly settled, and on June 13, 1850, the month which saw the publication of "In Memoriam," there was a wedding "of the quietest" in Shiplake church, "one of the grand old village churches," Miss Mitford says, "which give so much of character to English landscape. A large and beautiful pile it is, . . . the tower, half-clothed with ivy; . . . famed far and near for its magnificent oak carving and the rich painted glass of its windows, collected,

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long before such adornments were fashionable, by the fine taste of the late vicar, and therefore filled with the very choicest specimens of mediæval art, chiefly obtained from the remains of the celebrated Abbey of St. Bertin, near St. Omer, sacked during the first French Revolution."

The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Mr. Rawnsley, vicar of the church, Mrs. Rawnsley being a cousin of Miss Sellwood's and the meeting between the lovers having taken place under her roof. So hurried were the simple preparations for the marriage, that when the wedding-day came the dresses ordered for the bride had not arrived; even the wedding-cake was missing. But Tennyson liked it all the better for that. The little wedding-party was of the smallest, all close relatives of the bride and groom; and there, before the beautiful old altar, in the superb, vaulted church, stained with soft-toned rose and

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green and indigo by the sunlight pouring through the wonderful painted windows, the great, handsome poet, "Hercules as well as Apollo," clasped the fragile little hand of Emily Sellwood and grappled to himself a staff and stay which never failed his mighty spirit in its mightiest needs from that day thenceforth, until, releasing it for a brief season, he slipped out to sea to meet his Pilot, leaving behind him "no sadness of farewells," but only a subdued joy in his investiture with immortality.

In after-life he used to say of that June morning, "The peace of God came into my life before the altar when I wedded her."

"With her," writes his son, "he always discussed what he was working at; she transcribed his poems; to her and no one else he referred for a final criticism before publishing. She, with her tender, spiritual nature, and instinctive nobility of thought, was always by his side, a ready, cheerful, courageous, wise, and sympathetic counsellor.

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It was she who shielded his sensitive spirit from the annoyances and trials of life, answering (for example) the innumerable letters addressed to him from all parts of the world. By her quiet sense of humor, by her selfless devotion, by 'her faith as clear as the heights of the June-blue heaven,' she helped him also to the utmost in the hours of his depression and sorrow."

And to her he wrote the dedication of "Enoch Arden:"

"Dear, near and true,—no truer Time himself
Can prove you, tho' he make you evermore
Dearer and nearer, as the rapid of life
Shoots to the fall,—take this and pray that he
Who wrote it, honoring your sweet faith in him,
May trust himself; and after praise and scorn,
As one who feels the immeasurable world,
Attain the wise indifference of the wise;
And after autumn past—if left to pass
His autumn into seeming-leafless days—
Draw toward the long frost and longest night,
Wearing his wisdom lightly, like the fruit
Which in our winter woodland looks a flower.'

This was written in 1864, when they had been married fourteen years. Nearly

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thirty years after, in 1892, when the majestic old poet, past his four-score mark by several years, was concluding the last volume of poems he was ever to give to the world, he wrote this dedication for the book, addressed to her :

“ There on the top of the down,
The wild heather round me and over me
 June’s high blue,
When I look’d at the bracken so bright and the
 heather so brown,
I thought to myself I would offer this book to
 you,
This, and my love together,
To you that are seventy-seven,
With a faith as clear as the heights of the
 June-blue heaven,
And a fancy as summer-new
As the green of the bracken amid the gloom of
 the heather.”

Serene and sweet, she walked by his side for more than forty years, quickening his insight, strengthening his faith, fulfilling his every heart’s desire ; and when the eventide was come,

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“Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark,”

she was still there, nor let go his hand until he put it in that of the Pilot himself, when he had “crossed the bar.”

CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S LATE ROMANCE

A GOOD many of those who have created romance for others have had to wait long for its entrance into their own lives. Hawthorne was forty when he married, Tennyson and Elizabeth Barrett were the same age, Edmund Spenser was forty-two, and George Eliot, when she entered into her relationship with Lewes, was thirty-five. Of the women novelists who preceded Charlotte Brontë nearly all died unmarried. Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Miss Ferrier, Miss Martineau, all filled spinsters' graves. But though tragic histories are the rule rather than the exception among writing folk, though many of them waited long for romantic happiness and many never

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had any at all, there was none of them who had so pitiful a heart history as the little woman up in bleak Yorkshire who, by casting away from the stilted heroines of her predecessors in fiction and daring to write of the heart of woman in all the burning earnestness requisite to the theme, virtually created a new era in romantic literature.

Prior to the advent of Charlotte Brontë upon the scene, the only accepted ideal for females in the matter of romance was the attitude of coy, simpering "retreat" from the masculine advances they had been so carefully taught to attract. Charlotte Brontë came and unveiled the fierce hunger of the woman heart, and so great was the shock offered to some of the pious Lydia Languishes of her time that many of them echoed Lady Eastlake's cruel declaration that only a woman of easy virtue, a denizen of the "half-world," could or would write so.

Everyone knows the Brontë story ;

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few figures in the history of literature have absorbed so much interested attention as those that played their brief parts in far-off Haworth rectory and were so soon gathered into the quiet Haworth churchyard. Everyone has read how, one February day in 1820, seven country carts laden with books, household and kitchen furniture creaked through the one long street of Haworth, the horses tugging uphill all the way to the gate of the parsonage. The new parson had come. His name was Patrick Brontë, he was forty-three years old, had been married eight years, and was the father of six children and the husband of a little, pale, worn-out wife six years his junior; she lived only about eighteen months after settling in her Haworth home, and was the first to be gathered out of that bleak stone rectory into the burying-ground separated from the vicarage garden by just a stone wall. This was in September, 1821. In May, 1825,

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her oldest child, her namesake, Maria, died, aged twelve; five weeks later, Elizabeth, the second child, died, aged eleven. There were three girls and a boy left. The girls grew up, in boarding-schools chiefly, and each tried to earn a livelihood in the capacity of nursery governess, failing in turn and drawing closer and closer together as their shy natures refused to support them in any association with the big world. They had grown up on the Yorkshire moors, wild, unloved, full of weird fancies and imaginative self-sufficiency. Like the fish which became blind in Mammoth Cave through not needing eyes, the Brontë children, forced in early years to rely solely on themselves for companionship, were unable when thrust into the world of complicated social relations, to adjust themselves to new possibilities. Branwell, the son, was wild and troublesome and gave his sisters much anxiety and distress, and they, as time

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went on, huddled closer for comfort, each cherishing the dream of their girlhood—to write ; and each writing away feverishly, as an outlet to her pent-up feelings. Within two months, in 1847, there were published three novels, by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell—that is to say, by Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë. The novels were *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Agnes Gray*; the first appeared in October, the other two in December. Two years before, at their own expense, the sisters had published a little volume of poems, but it fell still-born from the press, an utter failure so far as attracting any encouragement to their efforts or any means to their slender purses ; and during those two years a novel of Charlotte's, *The Professor*, had been declined by six different publishers. Still the three girls persevered, though not even their father had any knowledge of their efforts until after success had crowned them.

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But not even the quick fame which leaped to meet Charlotte's novel and which was so abundant that it readily stretched to include, in lesser measure, the less remarkable novels of her sisters, could bring much sweetness to their home, where for some time the father had been waging a bitter struggle against blindness from cataract, and where Branwell Brontë in the most frightful orgies of drunken dissipation was hurrying himself towards his horrible end. In September, 1848, he died. In December of the same year, Emily, who had not passed the threshold of the parsonage since she followed her brother's coffin across the tiny yard to the burying-ground beyond, succumbed to consumption, after a pitiful struggle, and on May 28, of the year following, Anne, too, surrendered, after a heartrending struggle to live on.

While these awful sorrows were going over her Charlotte was writing *Shirley*,

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which was published in the year of Anne's death. Charlotte's letters of this period are among the most terribly pathetic things in all literature. After *Shirley* came out and was so magnificently reviewed, Charlotte dropped her incognita and made a number of visits to London and elsewhere, being much fêted and gazed at and talked about, but this resultant of her success pleased her little or none. It was far greater joy to her, far greater satisfaction and reward to her artist soul's craving for sympathy and appreciation, when she could talk over her work with her sisters in the long evenings at Haworth, before "the beginning of the end." Her stern, unlovely old father took some interest in her work, but not much—not a warm, active sympathy anyway, not a helpful nor an inspiring sympathy; just a grim sort of satisfaction in the success that attended her efforts, in the fame that they brought her. She met many of the

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great writers and many of the fine nobility of her day, but with few exceptions they failed utterly to attract her; with none of them save with Mrs. Gaskell, who was to become her biographer, did she form anything like an intimacy. *Villette* was published in 1852; Charlotte was thirty-six and still immured in the old vicarage, with her father waxing more and more crotchety with age and growing feebleness.

Charlotte had had three offers of marriage, but none of them had seriously attracted her. Two of these were made in one year, when she was twenty-three years of age and long before she gave slightest promise of literary productiveness, let alone fame. One of them came from the Rev. Henry Nussey, brother of Charlotte's dear and lifelong friend, Ellen Nussey. He was a very good man and was sincerely attracted to Charlotte, who was plain of face and penniless, but she seems not to have

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entertained for one moment the idea of marrying him.

“Before answering your letter,” she replies to him under date of March 5, 1839, “I might have spent a long time in consideration of its subject; but as from the first moment of its reception and perusal I determined on what course to pursue, it seemed to me that delay was wholly unnecessary. . . . I have no personal repugnance to the idea of a union with you, but I feel convinced that mine is not the sort of disposition calculated to form the happiness of a man like you. It has always been my habit to study the characters of those amongst whom I chance to be thrown, and I think I know yours and can imagine what description of a woman would suit you for a wife. The character should not be too marked, ardent and original, her temper should be mild, her piety undoubted, her spirits even and cheerful, and her *personal attractions* sufficient to please your eyes and gratify your just pride. As for me, you do not know me; I am not the serious, grave, cool headed individual you suppose; you would think me romantic and eccentric; you would say I was satirical and severe. However, I scor deceit, and I will never for the sake of attaining the distinction of matrimony and escaping the stings of

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an old maid, take a worthy man whom I am conscious I cannot render happy."

To Ellen, a week later, Charlotte wrote :

"There were in this proposal some things which might have proved a strong temptation. I thought if I were to marry Henry Nussey, his sister could live with me, and how happy I should be. But again I asked myself two questions: Do I love him as much as a woman ought to love the man she marries? Am I the person best qualified to make him happy? Alas! Ellen, my conscience answered *No* to both these questions. I felt that though I esteemed, though I had a kindly leaning towards him, because he is an amiable and well-disposed man, yet I had not, and could not have, that intense attachment which would make me willing to die for him; and if ever I marry, it must be in the light of that adoration that I will regard my husband. Ten to one I shall never have the chance again; but *n'importe*."

Less than five months later she did, however, have another "chance." It was a very amusing occurrence to Charlotte, for it came in the shape of a most

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ardent proposal by letter from a man she had seen but once, a young Irish clergyman fresh from Dublin University, who had been brought to the Haworth rectory to call. Charlotte laughed and talked with him quite pleasantly, she remembered, and only——

“cooled a little, and drew in towards the latter part of the evening, because he began to season his conversation with Hibernian flattery, which I did not quite relish. However, they went away, and no more was thought about them. A few days after I got a letter, the direction of which puzzled me, it being in a hand I was not accustomed to see. Evidently it was neither from you nor Mary Taylor, my only correspondents. Having opened and read it, it proved to be a declaration of attachment and proposal of matrimony, expressed in the ardent language of the sapient young Irishman! Well! thought I, I have heard of love at first sight, but this beats all.”

“I am certainly doomed to be an old maid,” she wrote in this same year. “Never mind, I made up my mind to

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that fate ever since I was twelve years old."

Notwithstanding, she thought a great deal on love and marriage and all subjects connected with the woman heart, and one finds many a reference to such things in her delightfully free letters to Miss Nussey and others, such as, for instance, "My good girl, '*une grande passion*' is '*une grande folie*.' Mediocrity in all things is wisdom; mediocrity in the sensations is superlative wisdom"—a dictum which Charlotte may have believed at the moment she wrote it, and at some others, but which was certainly no ruling conviction of her life, we may be sure—and,

"No girl should fall in love till the offer is actually made. This maxim is just. I will even extend and confirm it. No young lady should fall in love till the offer has been made, accepted, the marriage ceremony performed, and the first half-year of wedded life has passed away. A woman may then begin to love, but with great precaution, very coolly, very moderately, very

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rationally. If she ever loves so much that a harsh word or a cool look cuts her to the heart she is a fool. If she ever loves so much that her husband's will is her law, and that she has got into the habit of watching his looks in order that she may anticipate his wishes, she will soon be a neglected fool."

This was a very different tune from that which this same Charlotte sung in a letter of only a year earlier in which she said, of "the not improbable he" who might some day win her love, "and if he were a clever man and loved me, the whole world weighed in the balance against his smallest wish should be light as air.")

Evidently, like other women of delicately poised temperament and really deep capacity for loving, Charlotte vibrated between the extreme ideals of granting herself but grudgingly to any man, and lavishing herself utterly on some one who should be to her less a fair recompenser of her affections than

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a God-given outlet for her pent-up capacity.

It is probably true of most women that their first ideals of love are of some one who shall love them supremely, and that as they grow older, their cry is, first of all, for some one to love supremely ; for it is not a necessity to any one to be loved, but that each of us should know the power of an absorbing love for some other creature is an essential of development if not of salvation. Peculiarly is this true of woman ; a woman's first ideal is the man who can do most for her ; her second ideal is the man she can do most for ; and if she be a typical, natural woman, her first ideal soon gives place to the second, and the second is never supplanted. The woman heart thrives divinely on service, on sacrifice ; it is prone to a kind of moral prostitution in a situation in which it takes more than it can give. Charlotte Brontë knew the woman heart ; she must have known

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this world-old truth about it. But the woman's mind is not a stable thing; the heart of a good woman never fluctuates, but her mind does. It may be her decided opinion to-day that a woman ought to marry the man who can give her the most geegaws, and to-morrow she may tell you that a woman ought to marry the man who depends most utterly upon her; but to-day she will know she is lying and to-morrow she will know she is telling the truth. Her moods change, but her affections are fixed, and they are almost always fixed in the direction God meant they should be when He designed women for mothers.

Charlotte Brontë was a woman of genius, and women of genius are subject to affliction with a cloud of ideas which incline to obscure the eternal feminine, which is the unchangeable maternal, in them; and, moreover, women of all kinds are given to a vast deal of untruthfulness about matters of the heart.

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No one can reckon with a woman's utterances or with many of her actions without knowing this. And so, not knowing what bit of pique or bit of philosophy actuated her at the moment of writing, but knowing her to be a woman, and a good woman, and a woman deeply endowed for devoted loving, one may safely say that when Charlotte Brontë wrote "*une grande passion is une grande folie*," Charlotte Brontë was lying, and knew it!

Just what ideals she cherished of the man who might some day come into her life to absorb it, she does not tell. Her life was always one of what most people would call great loneliness, but it is quite probable that she never considered it grievously so until her sisters died.

In September, 1850, Charlotte wrote to Miss Nussey, denying a report that she was to be married, and saying:

"Doubtless there are men whom, if I chose to encourage, I might marry; but no matrimonial

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lot is even remotely offered me which seems to me truly desirable."

Yet at this time there were at least two very ardent suitors for her hand; one of them, a Mr. James Taylor, of the house of Smith, Elder & Co., Miss Brontë's publishers, and the other her father's curate, Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls. Mr. Taylor was sent down from London to arrange with her some final details about the publication of *Shirley*, and seems to have lost no time in falling very sincerely in love with Charlotte. For a wonder, his suit had her father's support, and Charlotte herself seems to have considered it with some seriousness, but to no purpose, and Mr. Taylor, deeply disappointed at his non-success, went out to India for five years "to recover." After he was gone Charlotte wrote Miss Nussey:

"I am sure he has estimable and sterling qualities; but with every disposition and with every wish, with every intention even to look on him in

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the most favorable point of view at his last visit, it was impossible to me in my inward heart to think of him as one that might one day be acceptable as a husband. It would sound harsh were I tell even *you* of the estimate I felt compelled to form respecting him. Dear Nell, I looked for something of the gentleman—something I mean of the *natural* gentleman ; you know I can dispense with acquired polish, and for looks, I know myself too well to think that I have any right to be exacting on that point. I could not find one gleam, I could not see one passing glimpse of true good-breeding. It is hard to say, but it is true. In mind, too, though clever, he is second-rate—thoroughly second-rate. One does not like to say these things, but one had better be honest. Were I to marry him my heart would bleed in pain and humiliation ; I could not, *could* not look up to him. No ; if Mr. Taylor be the only husband fate offers to me, single I must always remain. But yet at times I grieve for him, and perhaps it is superfluous, for I cannot think he will suffer much ; a hard nature, occupation, and change of scene will befriend him.

Mr. Nicholls came to Haworth as curate in 1844, when he was twenty-

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seven and Charlotte twenty-eight years old. He was an Irishman, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and quite good-looking. But Charlotte had small use for him. Soon after he settled in Haworth Charlotte wrote to Miss Nussey, who seems to have met Mr. Nicholls and thought well of him, "I cannot for my life see those interesting germs of goodness in him you discovered; his narrowness of mind always strikes me chiefly. I fear he is indebted to your imagination for his hidden treasure."

Two years later some one started a report that she was to marry Mr. Nicholls, who seems to have been devoted to her from the first, but she denied it, saying, "A cold, far-away sort of civility are the only terms on which I have ever been with Mr. Nicholls." In 1846 Mr. Nicholls went home to Ireland for a visit, staying some time, and about the time *Jane Eyre* was published Charlotte remarks in a letter to Miss Nussey that he has not

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yet returned, and adds, "I am sorry to say that many of the parishioners express a desire that he shall not trouble himself to recross the Channel."

In *Shirley* Charlotte described Mr. Nicholls as Mr. Macarthy,—a humorous but not unkindly portrait,—and Charlotte reports that he was pleased with it, that he gave vent to "roars of laughter" over it as he read it aloud to her father. The references to him in her letters are most casual, however, until under date of December 15, 1852, she writes to Miss Nussey:

"On Monday evening Mr. Nicholls was here to tea. I vaguely felt without clearly seeing, as without seeing, I have felt for some time, the meaning of his constant looks and strange, feverish restraint. As usual Mr. Nicholls sat with papa till between eight and nine o'clock; I then heard him open the parlor door as if going. I expected the clash of the front door. He stopped in the passage; he tapped; like lightning it flashed on me what was coming. He entered; he stood before me. What his words were you can guess; his manner you can

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hardly realize, nor can I forget it. Shaking from head to foot, looking deadly pale, speaking low, vehemently yet with difficulty, he made me for the first time feel what it costs a man to declare affection where he doubts response. . . . He spoke of sufferings he had borne for months, of sufferings he could endure no longer, and craved leave for some hope."

Charlotte referred him to her father, but he said he dared not approach Mr. Brontë on the subject, and Charlotte had to undertake the horrid task herself. Mr. Brontë, true to expectation, stormed and raved and swore, and heaped vile epithets on his curate, so vile that Charlotte, who had no love for the poor young man, was moved to indignation at her father's injustice to him. Mr. Brontë, who had done nothing at all to help his daughters in their literary labors, and was the last to recognize their success, had begun to be exceedingly elated and quite haughty over Charlotte's greatness and all the

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fuss made over her, and took it upon himself to decide that Charlotte, if she married, should not marry a curate on a hundred pounds a year, but make a "desirable match" in keeping with her celebrity.

Mr. Nicholls, in deepest despair, refused to eat, refused all comfort, and kept himself wrapped in such frightful gloom that fears for his health were seriously entertained. Now, Charlotte had never manifested the least interest in her father's curate, had thought him narrow and cold and generally unlikable, but Charlotte was no different from other women in the strength of her pity, and Mr. Brontë could not have adopted worse tactics, from his point of view, than he did when he began to abuse Mr. Nicholls; and nothing could, in all probability, have influenced Charlotte quite so much in Mr. Nicholls's behalf as her father's injustice, coupled with the fact that Mr. Nicholls took something,

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whether her father's abuse or her lack of responsiveness, so hard that he was obliged to leave Haworth and fill a curacy somewhere else. When he decided to go, Charlotte, who really deplored the whole unhappy affair very deeply, wrote Miss Nussey that "if Mr. Nicholls be a good man at bottom it is a sad thing that Nature has not given him the faculty to put goodness into a more attractive form." His disappointment certainly worked no pleasant change in him, for Charlotte says :

"He never was agreeable or amiable, and is less so now than ever, and alas ! I do not know him well enough to be sure that there is truth and true affection or only rancour and corroding disappointment at the bottom of his chagrin. In this state of things I must be and I am entirely passive. I may be losing the purest gem, and to me far the most precious life can give—genuine attachment—or I may be escaping the yoke of a morose temper."

It was not till May 27, 1853, however, that the rejected lover left the scene of

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his defeat. The evening before, he called to say good-by to Mr. Brontë, whose assistant he had been for nearly ten years ; Charlotte was not in evidence when he came ; the timid little creature of thirty-seven years was skulking in the background, dreading to have to speak the last word to her lover in her father's harsh presence. Mr. Nicholls thought she was avoiding him altogether, and, indeed, she says she was not sure until the very last moment that she was not.

“But perceiving that he stayed long before going out at the gate and remembering his long grief, I took courage and went out trembling and miserable. I found him leaning against the garden door in a paroxysm of anguish, sobbing as woman never sobbed. Of course, I went straight to him. Very few words were interchanged, those few barely articulate. Several things I should have liked to ask him were swept entirely from my memory. Poor fellow ! But he wanted such hope and encouragement as I could not give him. Still I trust he must know now that I am not cruelly blind and indifferent to his constancy and

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and grief. For a few weeks he goes to the south of England ; afterwards he takes a curacy somewhere in Yorkshire, but I don't know where. Papa has been far from strong lately. I dare not mention Mr. Nicholls's name to him. He speaks of him quietly and without opprobrium to others, but to me he is implacable on the matter. However, he is gone—gone, and there's an end of it. I see no chance of hearing a word about him in future, unless some stray shred of intelligence comes through Mr. Sowden or some other second-hand source. In all this it is not I who am to be pitied at all, and, of course, nobody pities me. They all think in Haworth that I have disdainfully refused him. If pity would do Mr. Nicholls any good, he ought to have and I believe has it. They may abuse me if they will ; whether they do or not I can't tell."

The ensuing months were very lonely for Charlotte. The village people who had not been much attached to Mr. Nicholls the curate, were loyal in their sympathy for Mr. Nicholls the rejected lover, and they seemed to have let Charlotte know it. Moreover her father did not like his new curate, and complained

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of him almost constantly, until one day Charlotte rose in her night and told him that it was his own fault if he did not have a curate to suit him, that he had driven away by his violence a good friend and a Christian gentleman who was anxious not only to be a devoted helper to him during his declining years, but was also desirous of assuming the care and comfort of his only daughter, who would have no one in all the world to care for her when her father was gone. She had been corresponding with Mr. Nicholls, it seemed, and he had even been to Haworth to visit, on several occasions. Charlotte had now concluded that the future looked pretty desolate to her and that perhaps she could not do better than to accept Mr. Nicholls's love and do what she could to make him a good wife. She had told her father as much, and he, less interested in her welfare than in the fact that his curate did not suit him, consented to

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the return of Mr. Nicholls, not only to the church but to the household, and on April 11, 1854, in a letter to Miss Nussey, Charlotte, recapitulating the past year and Mr. Nicholls's conduct throughout, says,—

“Certainly I must respect him, nor can I withhold from him more than mere cool respect. In fact, dear Ellen, I am engaged.”

Not a very ardent declaration, but Charlotte at no time made 'pretense of being very ardent about the matter.

“While thankful to One who seems to have guided me through much difficulty, much and deep distress and perplexity of mind, I am still very calm, very inexpectant. What I taste of happiness is of the soberest order. I trust to love my husband. I am grateful for his tender love to me. I believe him to be an affectionate, a conscientious, a high-principled man; and if, with all this, I should yield to regrets that fine talents, congenial tastes and thoughts are not added, it seems to me I should be most presumptuous and thankless.”

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Poor little "inexpectant" bride! In just this inexpectant mood she went about the preparations which most women undertake with such joyousness. Her letters, up to the time of her wedding, are quite as much occupied with prosaic little details about new wall-paper and curtains and table-cloth borders, as with references to the groom-to-be. The wedding was on Thursday, June 29, 1854, in Haworth church, in the presence of only a handful of witnesses. At the last moment her amiable old father decided that he would not go, and Miss Wooler, Charlotte's old teacher, had to give the bride away.

The rest is soon told. Mr. Nicholls seems to have continued conscientious, high-principled, and, according to his lights, Christian and affectionate, but he made no effort to adapt himself to Charlotte's life, but exacted of her, as her pitiful little letters tell, conformity to his interests, his habits, his pursuits. But

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she was so "inexpectant" she does not seem to have been surprised at this ; as she had, all her life hitherto, denied her own longings and tastes and uncomplainingly conformed herself to the demands of her father, so, after her marriage, she conformed to two men instead of to one only, and gave herself up to the task of making them happy. She makes no more mention of writing, either of things written or of things to be—there is not a note reminiscent of the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* and *Villette* ; that part of her career seems to be closed. Instead she writes,—

"It is almost inexplicable to me that I seem so often hurried now ; but the fact is, whenever Arthur is in I must have occupations in which he can share, or which will not at least divert my attention from him—thus a multitude of little matters get put off till he goes out, and then I am quite busy."

Even the prospect of motherhood seems to have called from her no ex-

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pressions of joy. In fact, the only chronicles of the last few months of her life are a few piteous little records of suffering, with even more piteous little expressions of appreciation of her husband's kind, tender care. Always, in her few letters, written from her death-bed, it is her "kind husband," her "dear, patient, constant Arthur," as if the fact of his kindness were a continual surprise to her.

Early on the morning of March 31, 1855, she woke from a long, long stupor and found her husband, bending over her, praying for her life. "Oh!" she whispered faintly, "I am not going to die, am I?" He will not separate us, we have been so happy." But as the Haworth villagers began to be astir that raw March morning, the solemn booming of the church bell told them that the last of the parson's six children was ready to be gathered to the side of her poor, pale little mother who, at about

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the same age had begun the pitiful migration of Brontés from parsonage to burying-ground, just across the garden wall.

Charlotte's husband is still living. He remained at Haworth with Mr. Bronté for six years subsequent to Charlotte's death, and for many years since has been incumbent of an Irish parish, where he still is, or was at last accounts. He is eighty-four years old now, and though he was a man of mature years when he had his brief romance with the brilliant, "inexpectant" little Miss Bronté of imperishable fame, those days of Haworth must seem very, very long ago to him, and the pale, quiet, shrinking little Charlotte but a faint memory, so long since has he been the head of another household.

TWO LIGHTS THAT FAILED—THE STORIES OF JOHN RUSKIN AND EDWARD FITZGERALD

ONE of the earliest protests of the struggling human against the absolute is the seeming futility of good intentions without good direction ; innocence of the law does not insure immunity from the law's operations, nor are the purest purposes sufficient to guarantee one the best results. One of our first instincts of war with the powers that be is the distrust of Love which suffers us to burn our unoffending fingers in some fire of experience whereon we laid hands in thoroughly excusable ignorance that it was hot. Later, we come to know that there is a higher office of Love than that of shield or fire-screen, and to praise the Divine Wisdom

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which allows men to stumble and burn and suffer, to glorious purpose in the end.

Obligations of a high character were undertaken about the same time in the mid-years of the last century by two men great in English literature, each in the most chivalrous spirit, and each according to his best wisdom at the time, and both suffered a bitter failure, which, according to superficial judgments, was ill deserved. The men were John Ruskin and Edward Fitzgerald, and some outline of their stories follows.

The first love John Ruskin knew was essentially shielding. In his delightful delineation of his child-character, its causes and consequences, in *Præterita*, Mr. Ruskin, after paying full tribute to the advantages of his rigid Scotch upbringing, catalogues first among its grievous disadvantages, "I had nothing to love. My parents were—in a sort—visible powers of Nature

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to me, no more loved than the sun and the moon—only I should have been annoyed if either of them had gone out.” Their training engendered in him “peace, obedience, faith,” the habit of fixed attention, and some others of kindred excellence, but gave him no exercise in love or endurance, no training in decision or judgment; he was “only by protection innocent instead of by practice virtuous.” The teaching of his early years was not to choose right from wrong, but to obey orders without questioning; and with no little pathos he tells how his mother, who enforced so vigorously her own law and visited so summarily the promised punishment for violation thereof, sought to shield him always from the operations of natural laws, being so fearful of him as to allow him to take no chances, as if nowhere outside of her own love did true kindness of justice exist. The results of all this were manifest throughout Ruskin’s life.

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When he was seventeen his father's partner, Mr. Domecq, brought his four daughters to visit the Ruskins, and in this "fiery furnace" of feminine beauty and charm the queer, starveling only child, John Ruskin, was "reduced to a mere heap of white ashes in four days." The chief charmer was Adele Clotilde, called by her sisters Clotilde, but by Ruskin Adele, "because it rhymed with shell, spell, knell," and he was already a little more than a budding poet. In company with this enslaver of his fancy, when others were present, the young lover "sate jealously miserable like a stock fish (in truth, I imagine, looking like nothing so much as a skate in an aquarium trying to get up the glass)." When alone with her he entertained his "Spanish-born, Paris-bred, and Catholic-hearted mistress with my own views upon the subjects of the Spanish Armada, the battle of Waterloo, and the doctrine of transubstantiation,"—high

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crimes which she doubtless forgave him, however, when he indited sonnets to her during her stay, and after she left wrote her "a French letter seven quarto pages long, describing the desolation and solitude of Herne Hill since her departure." Moreover, he set himself to write, in her honor, "a tragedy on a Venetian subject, in which the sorrows of my soul were to to be enshrined in immortal verse," whereof the heroine was to be an incomparably lovely Bianca, replica of Adele. The elder Ruskin and his partner looked with some amusement and no displeasure on this youthful romance, but Mrs. Ruskin, owing to the girl being a Roman Catholic, held the idea of a union between the two "as too monstrous to be possible in the decrees of heaven, and too preposterous to be even guarded against on earth." She was, however, "rather annoyed at the whole business, as she would have been if one of her chimneys had begun smoking,

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but had not the slightest notion her house was on fire."

"I remember nothing more of that year, 1836," he says, "than sitting under the mulberry-tree in the back garden [whereof, in another place, he says that "the differences of primal importance which I observed between the nature of this garden and that of Eden, as I have imagined it, were that in this one all the fruit was forbidden; and there were no companionable beasts"] writing my tragedy. I forgot whether we were travelling or not, or what I did in the rest of the day. It is all now blank to me, except Venice, Bianca, and looking out over Shooter's Hill, where I could see the last turn of the road to Paris."

In the spring of 1838, Mr. Withers, an old neighbor of the Ruskins, a coal merchant who had

"retired to the rural districts in reduced circumstances, came up to town on some small vestige of carboniferous business, bringing his only daughter with him to show my mother. . . . We got to like each other in a mildly confidential way, in the course of a week," he chronicles of the fair

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Charlotte, "and, as I said, if my father and mother had chosen to keep her a month longer, we should have fallen quite melodiously and quietly in love ; and they might have given me an excellently pleasant little wife, and set me up, geology [his pet passion] and all, in the coal business, without any resistance or further trouble on my part."

But the gentle, docile Charlotte went away, and of the incident Ruskin writes :

"Very dimly, and rather against my own will, the incident showed me what my mother had once or twice observed to me, to my immense indignation, that Adele was not the only girl in the world."

He seems, however, to have had no other idea of his ultimate marriage than that, whether Charlotte Withers or another be his parents' choice, it would be accomplished "without any resistance or farther trouble" on his part !

In this spirit he went, in the same year with the Withers episode, or perhaps in the year following, to call on a

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friend of his father at Hampstead, who had a daughter "who was everything that a girl should be, and an heiress." The parents on both sides desired a match; but, although Ruskin told his, when interviewed on the subject, that he "saw all her beauty, and merit, and niceness," he was, if not fractious in the matter, at least not enthusiastic about it, saying that, in spite of her manifold virtues and attractions, "she yet was not my sort of girl." Evidently Ruskin was progressing to a critical stage. At any rate, Miss Wardell died soon after his decision with regard to her, and not long thereafter poor little Charlotte Withers, the mistreated wife of a coal dealer in her home town, succumbed to inertia and unhappiness and gave up the struggle. Adele Clotilde Domecq did not live long either; she was married to a French nobleman in 1840, and is said by Mr. Ruskin to have died while still very young. All these shadows of the

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fell Destroyer were but momentary griefs, however, compared to the great trial which was in store for young Ruskin about this time. In May, 1840, he was pronounced consumptive, and had to give up Oxford, which with him, then, was tantamount to giving up everything that made life worth living. For nearly two years he was dragged about from place to place and from doctor to doctor, in search of health ; gradually this came to him again, not thoroughly, but relatively. He was never strong again, but he learned to live in weakness. Never man clung to life with more affection for it than he, till the long-delayed end ; but he had to learn to take it as the children in the wilderness took their manna, each day's gift a new reprieve from death ; not as the man of ordinary sturdiness and hopefulness takes life, even with his knowledge of its uncertainty, reckoning it, instinctively, three score years and ten with (from the view-point of youth,

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at least) "plenty of time for everything."

While Ruskin was adjusting himself, not without struggles so severe as to be worthy the characterization of tragic, to this new idea of life, there came to Herne Hill, to visit, a family from Perth, where the Ruskins had had relatives at one time and where John had spent many happy hours as a boy. These were people of slender means, but they had one treasure, a daughter of radiant beauty and vigorous health, whose lively interest attached itself to the saddened young scholar. To amuse her, he acceded to her demand and wrote for her a fairy-tale which, published a number of years later, straightway became a nursery classic throughout Britain,—
"The King of the Golden River."

In 1847 Ruskin was travelling in Scotland and stopped, in accordance with his parents' wishes, at Bower's Well, Perth, where they had been married, and there,

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also in accordance with his parents' wishes, he proposed marriage to the young lady for whom, some years before, he had written the charming fairy-tale. On April 10, 1848, they were married, and went to Keswick, in the beautiful Lake Country of England, for their honeymoon. If Ruskin seemed practically a tool in the matter, he was at least not an unwilling nor an ill-pleased one, for his bride was a dazzling beauty with the most superb health and spirits, which must have appealed not lightly to the frail, quiet, scholarly young man of nine-and-twenty, while his wealth and social position and growing fame must needs have made their own appeal to the Scotch lassie, even if she found the ardor of the traditional lover lacking in her bridegroom. But the complementary union hoped for did not come to pass; the power was lacking which might have made them one. He was absorbed in his scholarly pursuits, shy,



MRS. RUSKIN, AFTERWARDS LADY MILLAIS

From the portrait by Sir John E. Millais, R.A.

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grave, perhaps a little austere, conserving his scant energy for his work and able to share none of her vigorous young enthusiasms for the delights of the London world. She was a hearty, wholesome, exceedingly active, zestful young beauty, delighted with her new possessions and position, but dismayed to find her husband so little allured by her heart's desire, so little able to appreciate her point of view, or she his. Conscientiously, earnestly, to the best of his ability, and always with chivalrous tenderness for the young woman he had pledged himself to love and cherish, Ruskin tried, through six years, to win his wife's affection and to reconcile his tastes, to some degree, with hers. But, just to avoid discord is not to create harmony, and just to try conscientiously is not to achieve Love. Very few persons suspected that there was dearth of happiness in the Ruskin home; perhaps there was not actual unhappiness—at

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least not amounting to actual misery, except that it is active misery of the most undeniable sort, however little the calculable irritation, to know that one has only a bare makeshift where others have an illumining glory—until youth, beauty, and vigor corresponding to her own came athwart Mrs. Ruskin's life in the person of her husband's friend, the artist, John Everett Millais, and when she looked on him she loved him, and when he looked on her he loved her straightway, and when Ruskin saw, he understood, and presently, the Perth marriage, which had never really been any marriage at all, was annulled, and John Ruskin went back to live, as in his boyhood, with his parents again, and after a time she who had been called Mrs. Ruskin became Mrs. Millais, a radiantly happy wife whose long years of perfect wedded bliss are known to all the world to-day.

Ruskin had simply never known love



JOHN RUSKIN IN 1857

From the portrait by George Richmond, R.A.

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she had come to bestow no small share of her little ladyship's affections on John Ruskin, she went to the delectables of the bakery for a name for him, calling him "Crumpet," which she subsequently enlarged to "Saint Crumpet" in token of his generosity to beggars. This sweet companionship which began at once between Rosie and her "Saint Crumpet" diminished not a whit as the years rolled by. When Rosie was sixteen he wrote a book to please her and to inspire her ; it was called *Sesame and Lilies* ! Probably no book of the century has had a greater or wider influence on young womanhood.

And so, watching Rosie blossom into radiant young womanhood, there came a wonderful experience to Ruskin, such as not seldom comes to those who hang above young growing things in tender ecstasy of interest and delight in the unfolding processes of Nature, and at fifty-three years of age the pent-up pas-

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sion of John Ruskin's life broke bounds and overflowed, and the hand that let loose the mighty flood was little Rosie's. Rosie loved him tenderly, in a way, but not well enough to marry him, as he so urgently wished, and "in the bitterest despair," in the words of one who knew him well, he sought refuge in his work, which to the end carried in every strain the deep, minor chord of the lost Rosie. Rosie's refusal to marry him was based on their difference of religious beliefs. She was sternly evangelical, of which creed he spoke and wrote scoffingly, and she could not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. "To her," says Collingwood, Ruskin's chosen biographer, "the alternative was plain; the choice was terrible; yet, having once seen her path, she turned resolutely away. It cost her life. Three years after, as she lay dying, he begged to see her once more. She sent to ask whether he could yet say that he loved God better than he loved her ;

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and when he said 'No,' her door was closed upon him forever."

It does not altogether appeal to us, this position of Rosie's; it is not altogether easy to sympathize with the decision of the young girl who, though she loved him so devotedly that to give him up cost her life, was afraid to marry John Ruskin because of what he did or did not believe and its failure to coincide with her conception of what was right. But without doubt she was very earnest, terribly earnest in the matter, and equally without doubt her decision was a blow from which Ruskin never recovered. In the preface to his *Lectures on Art* he speaks of her death as "taking away his personal joy in anything he wrote or designed," and "Your poor John Ruskin" was his pitiful signature to certain intimate letters, in the later years, and "lonely and unhappy" is the characterization of his life in Mrs. Meynell's sketch of him. But another

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biographer, writing of Rosie, has this to say of her :

“The work she might never have done in life was accomplished through the strength of her sacrifice. His lost love became to him a spiritual presence, guiding, restraining, and leading him at last to faith in God and the world to come.”

Thus the love-history of John Ruskin !

Edward Fitzgerald's love-history is even sooner told. There is a dim legend about his having loved and lost a girl sweetheart in his youth, and this being the reason for his hermit life, but this is not verifiable, owing to the extreme scantiness of “intimate” material concerning Fitzgerald. His marriage occurred in November, 1856, when he was forty-seven years old, and was the most unromantic affair conceivable, although undertaken (poor gentleman !) in the most chivalrous, the most



EDWARD FITZGERALD

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knightly spirit. When the good old Quaker poet, Bernard Barton, died, in 1849, he commended to his dear friend Fitzgerald's care Miss Lucy Barton, a spinster of about forty, who had been her father's constant companion during the later years of his life. Together they had lived, in sweet Quaker simplicity, the benignant old poet, friend of Lamb and Coleridge and Southey, and his only child, motherless from her birth ; together they had "managed" on the slender little income of Mr. Barton ; together they had sat down, year after year, to their serene, simple Quaker board ; together they had shared the pleasures of books and quiet friendships. When the old man died he asked Edward Fitzgerald, perhaps the dearest of his friends, to have a watchful eye on the welfare of dear Lucy, and the dear, genial, helpless, "shif'less" Fitzgerald accepted the charge, perhaps without many misgivings, since he had known

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Miss Lucy so long and found her always so infinitely capable.

For a time after Mr. Barton's death Miss Lucy managed very well without any assistance from her "guardian." She was companion to a family of means and position, and with the pittance of her personal property got along very genteelly. But after seven years of independence Miss Lucy's fortunes changed. The young ladies who were her charges married, one by one, the pittance proved sadly inadequate, and the future looked harassing indeed to the distressed gentlewoman. Then, it is said, word of her quandary was brought to her "guardian," just then very deeply absorbed in the Persian studies which soon thereafter resulted in his wonderful translation of Omar Khayyám's *Rubáiyát*. We can imagine the dear, queer, absent-minded, and impractical old scholar,—not so old either, only he always seemed old, just as he always

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used to call his friends "dear old" Ten-nyson, or Thackeray, or Carlyle when neither they nor he had reached life's meridian,—wrinkling his forehead over his ward's perplexities, and exclaiming, "Dear, dear!" and wondering feebly, in his helpless, kindly way, what he could do about it. He had enough, and much more than enough, for all his needs and for luxuries not a few. How could he share with her? One can fancy him taking counsel with himself and trying to remember the conventions of the polite world which seem so often to run counter to the dictates of the polite heart, and to decide what would be permissible for him to offer Miss Barton and what would not. And what does he offer her, as the result of these cogitations, but marriage! And what does she do, poor distressed lady, but accept! Not a tremor or slightest thrill of romantic attachment do these two seem to have had for each other, and certainly

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not an atom of fitness had either of them to be the other's mate, but Mr. Fitzgerald had a fine home, and Miss Barton had none, he had plenty of everything material, and she had need of everything material ; if only it had seemed possible, in delicacy, to share with her without marrying her, then without doubt the great translator had lived and died a bachelor in fact as heaven had designed him to be by nature. But his solicitude transcended his caution—or perhaps it were more in keeping with his sweet, gentle nature to say that his unselfishness once more triumphed over everything else—and the primmest of Quaker spinsters, the most orderly of Puritan dames came to preside over the most disorderly bachelor's hall in England, and the most irregular and constitutionally disorderly man in all Britain. Poor lady ! How she must have suffered. And poor gentleman ! What he must have endured ! Neither of them was

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much under fifty ; and Love, the great modifier and adapter, they knew nothing of—nothing ! Poor, distraught Fitzgerald, inexpressibly grieved over the failure of his kindly intent, had to satisfy his instincts of generosity by settling a liberal part of his means on his “ward” and allowing her to maintain the integrity of her housekeeping orthodoxy in an establishment separate from his own castle of confusion. It was all very nobly undertaken, very sweetly meant, very conscientiously attempted—but it wasn’t a success ; even an absent-minded old Persian scholar of the most gentle, amiable disposition, and a cultured, capable, Christian gentlewoman who had made one scholar and poet very, very happy and comfortable, could not live harmoniously under the roof-tree where Love abode not. Tyrannical little blind god ! So impatient, even of the kindest motives of those who short-sightedly fail to recognize him, or mistake another,

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a mere commoner, for his imperial majesty! Kings are ever thus! They may like to masquerade, oh! never so well, but woe to that unlucky wight who does not penetrate the disguise and know his sovereign! And woe to that ill-seeing subject who makes the royal obeisance, by mistake, to the king's valet, or even to his lord high chamberlain, for his majesty will not forget the transgression. Best take no liberties with rulers! Calling a man a king does not make him one, and denying a king the title does not abrogate his power. Best to make no mistakes with monarchs!

POOR POE

IF Edgar Allan Poe had lived in Greece when the world was young, we should write of him to-day as one who had terribly displeased the gods, one at whom Jove aimed his thunderbolts, one whom the Furies pursued, one chained to the rock of daily torture, or perchance one thrice-sentenced—hurled prostrate by Jove, haunted by the avenging sisters and gnawed by an insatiable vulture. Outside of the mythology of the ancients one looks in vain for a figure so set about with tragic melancholy; scarce Hamlet, even, seems so consecrate to misfortune.

As Poe did *not* live when men accounted for misadventure by the ill-will of the gods, nor yet live to see such

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temperaments as his psychologically interpreted and reduced, on a scientific basis, to so much of such and such elements combining inevitably to produce such and such results, he was adjudged "just plain cussed" by the majority of his generation, and it has remained for a later day to afford him some more kindly estimate and explanation. Yet not without going back of the man himself somewhere, to some cause or causes predetermining his temperament and tendencies and foreordaining him to sorrow as surely as if the gods had cursed him, can we account to ourselves for a life so full of mishap and misadventure. On the title-page of Ingram's *Life* he is described as that—

"Unhappy Master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one
burden bore—

Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden
bore

Of 'Never,—nevermore.' "

POOR POE

And all narratives of Poe's life are, perforce, pitched in very much the same key as this, only some, recounting his misfortunes, do most accuse and some do more excuse him.

It was the tragic tendency of Poe's personality to antagonize people without intent. Those whom he knew not at all, he antagonized by his severe criticisms (born of his stern ideals of art, not of animus against his fellow-craftsmen) and by his fondness for hoaxing, a quality the public is slow to forgive. Those he knew well, he sooner or later arrayed against him, in many instances by momentary extravagances which he soon repented but which they took for keynotes of his character and evidences of his unfitness for friendship or for love. For one cause and another, traceable to no inherent meanness, but to an overplus of frictional qualities in his relationships with people, poor Poe was always making enemies, and both during

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his lifetime and after his death there were always pitifully few who were found with a good word to say of the "unhappy master ;" while, if proof were needed that he was born to be the prey of "unmerciful disaster," it might be deduced from the fact that after the "fitful fever we call life," the man chosen to be his biographer, because of his intimacy with Poe and his supposed friendliness towards him, turned his most scurrilous reviler, whose tissue of malicious lies about the poet it has been the devoted task of all biographers since painstakingly to controvert. But a lie travels faster and lodges more tenaciously than the truth, and Griswold's calumnies are credited to-day in many quarters that wot not of the refutations of Ingram and Woodberry and Gill.

Poe's inability to "get on" with people began early in his life and dogged him to the very end ; his school-days were full of it, his relations with his wealthy



EDGAR ALLAN POE

From the daguerreotype in the possession of
Edmund Clarence Stedman

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foster-father, Mr. Allan, were most unpleasantly terminated by it, his business associations, because of it, were one long nightmare of disappointments, changes, and estrangements. Even his affairs of the heart suffered by it, and his kindest benefactors and most doting admirers acknowledged themselves baffled and unable to cope with its fatality. Only one relationship—or perhaps we should say two, but two so closely united that they seem one—of all Poe's life was untainted by this unfortunate tendency; only one chapter in the turbulent story is marked by perfect trust and love that never wavered. It is the exquisite, albeit pathetic, idyl of Poe's childwife, the one spot of heaven in his tormented life. But to approach that chapter one must begin a little back of it.

Poe was only eighteen when his first book of poems, *Tamerlane*, now the dear desire of collectors and their despair, was published, and necessarily,

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to see a lady who wrote him that she had two little daughters whose art education she hoped to induce him to undertake. In *Præterita* he describes that visit with evident delight in the recollection. The elder of the two girls was out on the occasion of this first visit, but after seeing the mother,

“presently the drawing-room door opened, and Rosie came in, quietly taking stock of me with her blue eyes as she walked across the room. . . . Nine years old, on 3d January, 1858, thus now rising towards ten; neither tall or short for her age; a little stiff in her way of standing. The eyes rather deep blue at that time, and fuller and softer than afterwards. Lips perfectly lovely in profile—a little too wide and hard in edge, seen in front; the rest of the features what a fair, well-bred Irish girl's usually are.”

This was his first glimpse of the creature who was to reveal to him the supreme experience of a man's life. Rosie called her governess “Bun,” in expression of her niceness, and when

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younger. S. Elmira's father had other ideas for her, however ; he intercepted Poe's letters to her, and presently married her, to his satisfaction, to a Mr. Shelton. This episode lent a fine tinge of melancholy to the early verse of the young lover. More than twenty years later, when Poe met with his untimely death, he was on the very eve of marriage with Mrs. Shelton. But of that more anon !

Orphaned at the age of three years and left to the mercies of strangers, with no heritage but a double dower of consumption, Poe knew little of the companionship of his blood kindred until he was about three- or four-and-twenty. For some time he had been suffering the keenest distresses of privation and repeated disappointments, having quarrelled with his foster-father, been court-martialled out of West Point, and met with rebuff in his every effort to gain a livelihood.

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Fortune was at a low ebb with the brilliant young Poe when he took up his residence in Baltimore with his father's widowed sister, Mrs. Clemm. She had an only surviving child, a fairy little creature of eleven, Virginia, and in the society of mother and daughter their young kinsman found the first sweet peace of his fevered life. Mrs. Clemm was the essence of motherliness, and the little girl was the essence of childish love and trust, so that between them they taught him many things of the love that shelters and cherishes and the love that leans and believes. Rossetti found both these loves in one woman :

“ Sometimes she is a child within mine arms,

* * * * *

And oft, from mine own spirit's hurtling harms,
I crave the refuge of her deep embrace.”

Poe found these dual needs of man's nature not in one woman, but in two ; two united in their love for each other

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as in their love for him. Mrs. Clemm advised him, looked after him in his thousand little helplessnesses, comforted him for his disappointments, cheered him to new trials, and put her sturdy, practical sense and ability at his service to smooth, in whatever degree was possible, the way of his daily life. The child Virginia looked up to him, hung about him, idealized him, and appealed to all in him that was strong and tender and worthy of her child's sweet trust. It was a home of small material resources, that of Mrs. Clemm—far different from the home of the wealthy Allans, under whose care young Poe had grown up, where, along with the luxuries supplied with kindly intent, was always the sense of being on trial of worthiness. It was charity in the Allan home, no matter to what great lengths of indulgence it went ; it was love in the shabby little household of the Clemms, having no relation to merit except per-

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haps an inverse ratio, as is the world-old way of love. In those early days in the household of his aunt, Poe fought some of the hardest and bitterest of his many hard and bitter fights, not for recognition so much as for a bare sustenance; and during those days, too, he first faced the dread warnings of lingering but early death bequeathed him by both parents. "Unmerciful Disaster" seemed to crowd him well-nigh intolerably, for not only was he threatened with a manhood of slow decay, but the death of Mr. Allan and the complete omission of Edgar Poe from his will, together with the hitherto pampered young man's inability to find a livelihood for himself, made it seem as if the sum of terrors were in store for him. In this depression there fixed upon him the beginnings of his dissipations, his slavery to drink and drugs, to the indescribable horrors of which his life thereafter, to the bitter end, was a pathetic sacrifice.

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In all this distress he had only the love of the Clemms to cling to, and it presently began to seem as if Fate conspired to rob him even of that, for Baltimore failing utterly to provide him with a living, he was fain to take an offer to go to Richmond, there to work in an editorial position for ten dollars a week. If Poe grudged going back to the scene of his former life of ease and bright prospects and there taking up a new existence as a poorly-paid literary hack, we find no record of the fact, but that he did view with little less than terror the promise of separation from the Clemms we do know. He went to Richmond and entered upon his work there, finding it very agreeable and full of opportunity, but although a living was now his and fortune began to smile on him with appreciation of his unique work, he was not happy ; indeed, he was desperately miserable, and after a few months, in spite of the contrary advice of his friends, he

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returned to Baltimore to enter urgent suit for the hand of little thirteen-year-old Virginia. Like much of Poe's life, the exact truth about this expedition and its outcome is shrouded in contradictory statement and much mystery. Scarcely the evasive Shakespeare left so little absolute record of his transactions. It is said on the authority of Mrs. Clemm's conversation, taken down in short-hand, that Poe and her daughter were married in Baltimore, at old Christ Church, on September 22, 1835. The marriage records of Baltimore show that on that day he took out a license to marry, but they do not show any return of the license for a record of the contract, nor do the books of old Christ Church bear any witness to such a marriage. However, Poe returned to Richmond the following day, and soon thereafter Mrs. Clemm and Virginia followed him thither and the three took up their abode together, Poe exerting himself to borrow money

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for Mrs. Clemm wherewith to start a boarding-house, a scheme that never materialized. On May 16, 1836, Poe was publicly married to his cousin by the Rev. Amasa Converse, a Presbyterian minister, then editor of the *Southern Religious Telegraph*. Poe was twenty-seven and his bride was slightly under fourteen, although to procure the license she was sworn as of full age.

For a brief moment after this strange marriage it appeared as if the fortunes of Poe were on the mend, for the country at large was beginning to take note of him, and his immediate wants were supplied by regular employment under a man who was sincerely devoted to Poe and wonderfully patient with his many offences against friendship and business honor ; but at length Poe tried him beyond his endurance, adding a final straw that broke the patient camel's back, and at the beginning of 1837, six months after his marriage, he was again without

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an income, and travelling by slow stages to New York, with his two dependent women. In New York it was the same story,—brief seasons of employment, more or less violent quarrels of disruption, occasional respites from the threatening of direst want, marked by longer and longer terms of bitter dependence upon the charity and forbearance of his friends. In turmoil and unrest the years dragged by, the two faithful women sharing his curse of the roving hoof and tossing about pitifully from one poor abiding place to another, from New York to Philadelphia, and from Philadelphia (when he had quite exhausted the patience of everyone there) to New York again, whither he returned in the spring of 1844. In Philadelphia a new terror had been added to Poe's life,—his girl-wife who like himself was an heir to consumption, began to manifest the first fatal signs of the dread disease. This was in 1842, when Virginia was barely

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twenty. Some years later, after her death, Poe wrote of that first threatening :

“ Six years ago a wife whom I loved as no man ever loved before, ruptured a blood-vessel in singing. Her life was despaired of. I took leave of her forever, and underwent all the agonies of her death. She recovered partially, and I again hoped. At the end of a year the vessel broke again. I went through precisely the same scene. . . . Then again—again—and even once again, at varying intervals. Each time I felt all the agonies of her death—and at each accession of the disorder I loved her the more dearly and clung to her life with more desperate pertinacity. But I am constitutionally sensitive—nervous in a very unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity. During these fits of absolute unconsciousness I drank—God only knows how often or how much. As a matter of course, my enemies referred the insanity to the drink, rather than the drink to the insanity.”

As the result of these lapses Poe lost his editorial position in Philadelphia and took up the battle for existence again in New York, where horror was added unto

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horror as he watched his beautiful young wife die. Thence he sought a retreat in the country, in the little cottage which is still the shrine of so many pilgrims, and of the days there we have the following pathetic picture drawn by Mr. Woodberry from many sources :

“The cottage to which he had retired in the spring of 1846, although at the best a mean dwelling, was the pleasantest retreat he had known. It was a one-story-and-a-half house, still standing on Kingsbridge Road, at the top of Fordham Hill. Within, on the ground-floor, were two small apartments, a kitchen and a sitting-room ; and above, up a narrow stairway, two others, one—Poe’s room—a low, cramped chamber, lighted by little square windows like port-holes, the other a diminutive closet of a bedroom, hardly large enough to lie down in. The furniture was of the simplest ; in the clean, white-floored kitchen were a table, a chair, and a little stove ; and in the other room, which was laid with checked matting, were only a light stand with some presentation volumes of the Brownings upon it, some hanging shelves with a few other books ranged on them, and four chairs.” Out-



POE'S COTTAGE AT FORDHAM, NEW YORK
[From a photograph taken just prior to its removal]

POOR POE

side, however, the broad views, in contrast with the dwarfed interior, must have had, as is now the case, a fine spaciousness. The old cherry-trees are still rooted in the grassy turf, out of which crops here and there the granite of the underlying rock ; and a stone's throw to the east of the veranda, then as now overgrown with vines, rises the ledge itself, overhung by sighing pines and looking off far across the meadows, woods, and villages to the glimmer of ocean on the horizon. Of this little home in the pleasant country there are many reminiscences, curiously intermingling the beauty of Nature with the charm of the three occupants. Mrs. Clemm, now over sixty, with her large, benevolent features and white hair, in a worn black dress, made upon all who saw her an impression of dignity, refinement, and especially of deep, motherly devotion to her children ; Virginia, at the age of twenty-five, retained her beauty, but the large black eyes and raven hair contrasted sadly with the white pallor of her face ; Poe himself, poor, proud, and ill, anticipating grief, and nursing the bitterness that springs from helplessness in the sight of suffering borne by those dear to us, was restless and variable, the creature of contradictory impulses, alternating between the eagerness of renewed hope and the dull maze of ever-recurring

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disappointment. Friends called on him, and found him anxious over the one great trouble of his poverty, or inspirited by the compliment of a letter from Mrs. Browning, or endeavoring to distract his mind with his pets—a bobolink he had caught and caged, a parrot some one had given him, or a favorite cat.”

Through the summer of 1846 matters were not so pitifully bad in the little cottage, but with the chill winds of autumn Virginia grew steadily worse, and a friend who called on the family at Fordham after the snow came has left this description of what she found :

“There was no clothing on the bed, which was only straw, but a snow-white counterpane and sheets. The weather was cold, and the sick lady had the dreadful chills that accompany the hectic fever of consumption. She lay on the straw bed, wrapped in her husband’s great coat, with a large tortoise-shell cat in her bosom. This wonderful cat seemed conscious of her great usefulness. The coat and the cat were the sufferer’s only means of warmth, except as her husband held her hands, and her mother her feet. Mrs. Clemm was passionately

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fond of her daughter, and her distress on account of her illness and poverty and misery was dreadful to see.''

In these circumstances, somewhat mitigated from time to time by the charity of friends, lovely Virginia Poe lingered until the last of January, suffering much pain until her release, so that they who loved her suffered rather less than more when her agonies were over, Poe taking on himself the poor comforts of a man on whom Fortune has wreaked her worst and who has, therefore, nothing left to fear.

The rest of poor Poe's life (considerably less than three years) is quite too distraught and wretched to dwell upon. The mother-love of Mrs. Clemm was true to him to the last, even although he sought alliance with others. Crazed with grief, drink, opium, disappointment, bitterness, and tottering in ill-health, Poe's last days are a nightmare to contemplate. He had an "affair" of

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much fervor with a Mrs. Helen Whitman, who, after keeping him "dangling" for some time, finally concluded not to marry him, on account of his dissolute habits. And when he died he was engaged, as has been said, to marry the "S. Elmira" of his youthful dreams. Only those who understand the vagaries of the insane can account for the wild impulses of those last years or know why Poe should have felt moved to marry any woman when, as all the world must believe, his heart was buried with his Virginia, the child-wife of his youth. But ere he could accomplish his purpose, the poor, tempest-tossed life went out in one last tumultuous lashing against the circumstantial rocks.

Never more distraught, unhappy creature bent unwilling back, all a life long, before the stinging lash of "Unmerciful Disaster;" never went more pitiful story on record, to wring the hearts of all men who read, forever-

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more. But it was a life redeemed, we must believe, by a pure woman's pure love, even as was Tannhäuser's. No visible staff of wayworn and rejected pilgrim broke into lily-bloom over the bier of Virginia Poe in the poor little cottage at Fordham, but by the tearless anguish he endured there we know poor Poe must have been marked for forgiveness, for it is not by "our averages that we appeal to God, 'but by our longings and our needs, and by our love. And poor Poe "loved much," and loved purely, and somewhere, where the greatest is like to the littlest child, he must needs be, by the side of her whom he loved when both were young, "in a kingdom by the sea."

"But our love it was stronger far than the love
Of those who were older than we—
Of many far wiser than we—
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful ANABELL LEE."

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“**T**HERE is one fable,” says Stevenson, “that touches very near the quick of life: the fable of the monk who passed into the woods, heard a bird break into song, hearkened for a trill or two, and found himself on his return a stranger at his convent gates; for he had been absent fifty years, and of all his comrades there survived but one to recognize him. . . . All life that is not merely mechanical is spun out of two strands: seeking for that bird and hearing him. And it is just this that makes life so hard to value, and the delight of each so incommunicable, and a remembrance of those fortunate hours in which the bird has sung to us, that fills us with such wonder when

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we turn the pages of the realist. There, to be sure, we find a picture of life in so far as it consists of mud and old iron, cheap desires and cheap fears, that which we are ashamed to remember and that which we are careless whether we forget; but of the note of that time-devouring nightingale we hear no news."

I think that monk, all nameless as he comes down to us, touches, as a type, as "near the quick of life" as Hamlet. Doubtless he was a very learned old fellow; in all likelihood, what time he was not reading the history of the early church in Latin manuscripts he was engrossing or illumining ponderous books for the learned few of his generation; we may presume that he knew all the "dead" languages there are, and that the "deader" they were the more highly he esteemed them. Perhaps he had heard of the bird in the wood and had not infrequently strolled there, breviary in hand, half curious to hear it; but

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more probably nothing so little, so common as a nightingale had ever entered his august mind. God knows whether, for a moment, he was weary, terribly heart-sick and weary with his waste of learning, or whether, like Saul of Tarsus, he was struck by the Spirit while on his way to Damascus. But the bird sang, and the cold, formal scholarship of the past became a part of "that which we are ashamed to remember and that which we are careless whether we forget."

The story is repeated every day, but once upon a time it had a most wonderful repetition, in a woman—probably the most broadly and profoundly learned woman the world has ever known. Her biographer says she was not a precocious child, but as he goes on to say that at the age of ten or thereabouts she read everything she could lay hands upon, including *Rasselas* and Defoe's *History of the Devil*, we must infer that preco-

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city is a purely relative term ; judged by the literary absorptions of most of us at the age of ten, I should say that she was precocious. When she was fourteen Pascal fascinated her, and when she was twenty she filled her letters with her opinions on church history and schism and addressed herself to the task of compiling a chart of ecclesiastical history. At an age when other young, growing things are thrilling with the first flush of romance this girl was unbosoming herself of dissertations on dogma and concentrating her energies on somebody's *Connection of Physical Sciences* and somebody else's *Theory of Another Life*. Only to read the letters of her girlhood, with their thick peppering of learned allusions, is enough to make an ordinary head ache, while the effort to contemplate her mind's range of interest produces vertigo, then chaos. I think there are no more arid lands in all the realm of biographical literature than those

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holding the records of this woman's life up to the age of thirty-four or thereabouts. If, anywhere, a less buoyant, less lovable spirit, a less engaging personality, has put itself on record, I do not know it. Poor soul! One does not blame her for it, only pity her.

During the first twenty years of her life she lived in an enforced isolation in her farm home, where recourse to books was about the only variation in the routine of household duties. When she was in her twenty-second year she and her father moved into Coventry, where her life became freer of domestic obligations and widened a little to take in two or three intimate friendships. Her father, however, was up in years and absorbed a great deal of her time and attention. Reading of them, in her letters, the eight years spent in Coventry seem inexpressibly dreary, even pitiful, although quite devoid of untoward happening until they were brought

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to a close in the death of Mr. Evans. The wretchedness of her health, which is the dominant strain in all her letters and journals, there begins to cast its depression over everything, and the brooding, melancholy cast of mind becomes increasingly evident. In many respects, the life of this Mary Ann Evans was attuned to the blessed commonalty; she was an excellent house-keeper, holding always to the conviction that no amount of scholarly interests absolves a woman from the prime duty of capable home-making; she was a dainty seamstress; she loved out-of-doors passionately, yearned towards children and rejoiced intensely in family and friendly ties. But in spite of all these things in common with the unremarkable and happy women of the world, there was something in the plain, retiring, ailing daughter of Robert Evans, artisan, farmer, and land-agent, to set her apart from the majority of her kind. She was

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not a pedant, or not willingly so, but the tremendous catholicity and at the same time the scholarly thoroughness of her intellectual pursuits, such catholicity and such thoroughness as no woman, it seems perfectly safe to say, ever evinced before or since, inevitably overshadowed all else in her life, to the apparent, though not to the actual, dwarfing of all else in her endowment and character.

If it were not for her constant complaining of headache and low spirits her letters, in these years, would entirely lack any human quality. As it is, they are extraordinarily lacking in human interest. The wild excesses, the impetuous extravagances of youth are easy to deal gently with when they take the form of insubordination, frivolity, defiance of caution, impatience of restraint; but when they are excessive on the side of preternatural gravity, they are hard to feel tender towards. There is something infinitely forgivable and even love-inspir-

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ing in the frail, flashing young Shelley trying to prove to his classmates the necessity for atheism ; there is nothing but a cold, formal bit of history in the departure of the prim, puritanical Miss Evans from the paths of orthodoxy, owing to the unsettlement of her belief while she was at work on the translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. If there was anything of passionate warmth in that episode we do not gather as much from any record that we have of it, though it separated her for a time from her father and made her an outcast from her home. Nor, although we are assured that she grieved sincerely and sorely for her father, is there anything in any of her expressions thereanent that moves us to a throb of commiseration. After his death she went abroad, travelled in Europe, and finally settled for some little time in Geneva, but although her letters thence express the greatest longing after her few friends in England and some

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languid interest in the people about her in Switzerland—this excepting the family with whom she lived during the latter part of her stay and whom she loved devotedly to the end of her life—no straining of the ear can catch in them any note of “that time-devouring nightingale.” All she read, all she thought, all she saw, she transcribes for us without communicating a thrill ; there passed in review before her the most brilliant minds of the ages, the glory of the Alps and the tender beauty of the Italian lakes, but not the littlest glow reflected from any of them remains in her letters to warm the heart or kindle the imagination. Yet she was the kindest, the gentlest, and the most self-deprecating of women, generous in the most superb degree, solicitous, full of the strong desire to help and the dread of making trouble. Save that she was too modest by far, and never to her dying day had sufficient conceit of her-

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self, she might have said of the tables of the law, as did he who made what Dante calls "the great refusal," "all these have I kept from my youth." Poor, unimpeachable lady! So far from all the passions that rack and torment mankind and finally, conquered in a hard fight and led captive, bring the redeemed "out of great tribulation" into peace, great peace.

Miss Evans returned to England in the spring of 1850, when she was in her thirty-first year, and after some desultory visiting and writing in the homes of her friends and kindred, plans began to formulate looking towards her removal to London and assistance on the editorial staff of the *Westminster Review*. It was some time before the step was actually accomplished, it being the end of September, 1851, when she finally took up her residence in London and entered upon her regular work as assistant editor of the *Review*. Now began an

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entirely new sort of life for the learned recluse, a life that, in its enormous stimulus and enormous drain, only one who has lived somewhat similarly can quite appreciate. Her time ceased to be her own for her accustomed long stretches of digestive meditation, and became, as it were, the common property of a large literary contingent such as haunts all offices controlling public prints. She no longer read books from personal predilection purely, but because they were new and must be reviewed; she who had indulged the most epicurean taste in classic authors found herself obliged to give long, golden hours to the turgid manuscripts of literary aspirants and other long hours to the nerve-racking labor of reading proof. The times she set apart for work she found unavoidably consumed by office sociabilities, and the times she set apart for friendly visiting she found she must convert to the uses of her neglected

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editorial work. The continual strain on her patience was not offset by the stimulus of many keen and kindred minds, but rather heightened thereby, so that we find the calm, leisurely woman of retired country habits, kept in a flurry of unrest in her strange new life, made wretched by its uncertainties and through all its brilliant associations feeling gropingly for a spirit's anchorage.

In one of the first letters she wrote from London after her establishment there, she says :

“ On Friday we had Foxton, Wilson, and some other nice people, among others a Mr. Herbert Spencer, who has just brought out a large work on *Social Statics* which Lewes pronounces the best book he has seen on the subject.”

This Mr. Herbert Spencer soon became the most intimate of her London friends ; her letters thence on contain references to the growing heartiness of their association. In April, following, she writes :

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"I went to the opera Saturday with my 'excellent friend, Herbert Spencer,' as Lewes calls him. We have agreed that we are not in love with each other, and that there is no reason why we should not have as much of each other's society as we like. He is a good, delightful creature, and I always feel better for being with him."

A little later we find her writing to her old friends, the Brays of Coventry:

"My brightest spot, next to my love of *old* friends, is the deliciously calm, *new* friendship that Herbert Spencer gives me. We see each other every day, and have a delightful camaraderie in everything. But for him my life would be desolate enough."

This is all very well, Miss Evans! But when Herbert Spencer was merely a rising young author to you, it was Lewes's pronouncement on his worth that you quoted, though Lewes was but a name to you, identified with the brilliant literary criticisms of the *London Leader*, and when Spencer had advanced, in your affections, to the rank of saving

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your life from desolation, it was Lewes's characterization of him as your "excellent friend" by which you delighted to designate him !

And now, in the letters, references to Herbert Spencer begin to grow beautifully less and more casual, and references to one, Lewes, to grow, if no less casual, more and more frequent and significant. Her first meeting with him was in "Jeff's shop," whatever that may have been, and her curt comment on the introduction was, "a sort of miniature Mirabeau in appearance." Her first impressions, we know, were not flattering. It was, however, some eighteen months after she first met him that we find Miss Evans, who was always a little severe in her snap judgments and always a little too ready to pronounce them, writing to Mrs. Bray :

"People are very good to me. Mr. Lewes, especially, is kind and attentive, and has quite won my regard, after having had a good deal of

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my vituperation. Like a few other people in the world, he is much better than he seems. A man of heart and conscience, wearing a mask of flippancy.

That she could ever have so harshly judged Mr. Lewes as she seems to is in itself a curious commentary on the owl-like gravity of Miss Evans and a curious reiteration, too, of the world-old fact that what gifts and graces are not ours we naturally distrust.

George Henry Lewes was one of the most brilliant figures in the literary world of his time; a philosopher, scientist, and literary critic of a keen rather than a profound order, a versatile, bright-spirited, radiant-mannered man, brimming over with magnetic charm, and past-master of all the social graces, all the kindly pretty arts that make human intercourse a refreshment and a delight, he was a new species to the rather stolid Miss Evans, who probably rated him a Beau Brummell for his win-

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someness and took it for granted that a drawing-room favorite could not by any anomaly be a man of parts.

Doubtless, too, she knew the tragic story of his life and felt justified in judging that a man who masked that story with a smiling countenance could not be other than flippant. When she had anything to trouble her she complained about it loud and unceasingly. No wonder she could not understand a man who, notwithstanding the scandalous sacrilege in his home, was still able to hold up his head and refrain from rending the air with his noisy outcries !

Some years previous to her meeting with him this George Henry Lewes had married, at a very early age, and gone with his bride to live in a little settlement of young married folk in one of the London suburbs, who adopted the co-operative housekeeping plan and had a very jolly time of it. It was too jolly, by far, for the co-operative system left

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the young wives too little to do, and the combination of resources made amusements follow fast and furious on each other, until pleasure became the ruling passion, and the inevitable ensued. The young wife of Lewes eloped with another member of the colony, the husband of one of her women friends, leaving her study-loving husband quite dazed, with three little boys on his hands. After a little the deserter tired of her outcast position and sought forgiveness ; Lewes granted it, and for a time things went on tolerably well. But the frivolous, restive spirit was not conquered, only subdued, and in the course of time became uncontrollable again and a second flight ensued. This time the outraged husband would not forgive her, nor, indeed, did she desire it, from all accounts, preferring to abandon herself to a light life ; but here came in the hardship of the situation to Mr. Lewes, —having once condoned her fault, the

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English law held him ineligible for divorce on those grounds and condemned him to remain the husband of his erring spouse until death should them part.

This may have been no insupportable hardship until he met Mary Ann Evans. Nor have we any evidence by which we may know how soon after meeting her his position became intolerable to him. It is easy to see how the grave, quiet, scholarly woman with her intense nature, her unswerving loyalty to a few friends, a few principles, would attract the man who had suffered so sorely at the hands of a light, pretty creature. She had been dashing, beautiful, flashing with furbelows and shallow, noisy accomplishments, that woman who wrecked his home ; this woman was almost piteously plain, without any little feminine daintiness of dress, never quite at ease, socially—*heavy*, to tell the truth, with a literal, absolute, Teutonic sort of mind and a personality devoid of buoyancy

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or brilliance; but she was solid, substantial—reliability itself. Perhaps, too, he felt in her the power for intense loving, nay, the consuming hunger for the exercise of such power, which lay latent in the woman; perhaps her great admiration for him, when she had overcome her antipathy, may have been flattering—for when she had satisfied herself that his cheerfulness in affliction was courage, not flippancy, she did begin to admire him with all the ardor that only a ponderous nature can feel for one that is graceful and bright and full of facile expression where its worshipper is awkwardly silent.

She was distinctly not made for social purposes; her mental make-up was never mobile enough to adapt itself to numbers, or even to change with any ease from interest to interest, as the varying demands of different persons made necessary. She was one of those thorough-going souls, who, having once alighted

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with great deliberation of choice on any subject, sit there irremovably until the last drop of honey is extracted therefrom for their purposes. On the other hand, the enormous breadth of her intellectual range, the infinite number of things that, all in good time, did interest her, made her a woman of whom a meet companion might never weary. Lewes was a man who touched with infinite charm everything that he put his hand to. Not nearly so profound as Miss Evans herself—lacking entirely the tremendous constructive brain of her friend, “her excellent friend, Herbert Spencer”—he was pre-eminently an interpreter rather than a creator, a born disseminator whose diffusion of knowledge, touched with the exceeding charm of his own personality, has enshrined him in the grateful memories of many. If one would know the Lewes with whom Miss Evans fell in love, let him read Lewes’s *Life of Goethe*; there one finds

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in essence the qualities that suggest the most bracing, the most stimulating, the most enjoyable companionship one can readily conceive.

Into the soul loneliness of Miss Evans's eventful but unsatisfying life came this man who went from flower to flower in the intellectual world, distilling honey from them all ; he was a frail, frail man, ailing nearly all the time, but as full of strong spirit as any hero ; when he entered a room he carried a breeze with him, and sunshine ; he was a veritable magnet, drawing all men unto him, a brilliant raconteur, a wit of the first order ; he was quick to perceive, hearty in his encouragement ; not very judicial, perhaps, but very enthusiastic ; altogether the type of man who, while he might not have the thoroughness, the conservative judgment to do any notable work himself, would be just the one at whose door one might lay the inspiration and encouragement of half a hun-

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dred other folk with fewer but deeper gifts and purposes.

As for Miss Evans, though she had written little yet, and that little of a critical sort, from out her brain, not from her heart, she had doubtless seen enough of the literary, the accomplishing world, that world which glitters so entrancingly to those who behold it from afar off and is so full of pathos to those who know its secrets, to feel, with Aurora Leigh :

“How dreary ’tis for women to sit still,
On winter nights by solitary fires,
And hear the nations praising them far off,
Too far ! ay, praising our quick sense of love,
Our very heart of passionate womanhood,
Which could not beat so in the verse without
Being present also in the unkissed lips
And eyes undried because there’s none to ask
The reason they grew moist.”

We know that she *did* write, during those London days in the very thick of all that was splendid in that mid-century

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entailed upon her should be the hardships that come from the transgression of the law. Through all her life she was the most strenuous, the most unremitting upholder of moral law, feeling the responsibility of proclaiming it not in her writings alone but in her every association and communication, so that to many who came into personal relation with her she was never quite attractive because of her eternal moralizing, not dogmatically, quite, but insistently, as if only that mattered in all the world. She had a thorough Old-Testament, Hebraic attitude towards the law, like that of Kipling in our own day, rather than the attitude of Him who dared to transcend the law by the Spirit of Love.

Yet once in her life, one great time, when Love came to her, "a supreme love, a motive that gives a sublime rhythm to a woman's life, and exalts habit into a partnership with the soul's

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highest needs," she trod where it was hard to tread, she put herself, who loved to preach, forever in the place where all men might say to her, "Physician, heal thyself!" The English law would not let her marry Mr. Lewes legally, so she elected to consider herself married to him spiritually, and in 1854 they went over to Weimar, where they settled for a while, Mr. Lewes working on his life of Goethe. After a residence of some nine months in Germany they returned to England. Their friends were, for the most part, scandalized, some of them lightly, some irrecoverably; in course of time the beauty of this unsanctioned union, the truth and loyalty and utter devotion that attended it, without a flaw, won over a good many; some were never placated, and to the day of her death George Eliot never asked any one to call on her who did not first solicit the privilege, and her intercourse with women was always limited to a few who

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understood and loved her, and never extended to the many.

This is not the place to begin upon an argument on either side of that tremendous chasm between the world's two schools of thought, individualism and collectivism; to presume to say whether an exceptional individual has a right to interpret the law according to his own soul's exceptional needs, or whether strength, so far from giving privileges of this sort, rather entails a sublime *noblesse oblige* on its possessors and makes them, at any personal cost, the conservators of example for the struggling, the weak. If Mary Ann Evans could have foreseen the life and labors of George Eliot, perhaps she would have felt that the weight of her personal example was far overbalanced by the weight of good she was able to disseminate through her novels, written at the instigation of George Henry Lewes. Perhaps, if she could have forestalled

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the gathering up of testimony and knowledge on the Great Day, she might have seen that not all we *do* is of account at all, only that which we *are*. Certainly her four-and-twenty years of life with Lewes were idyllic—hard-working, always, full of earnest purpose and unremitting labor to accomplish it, but crowned with such perfection of love and mutual understanding and helpfulness as is hard to find record of elsewhere in the annals of biography. He first encouraged her to write fiction, and he, when her success proved his wisdom, devoted himself to her service, writing her letters for her, attending to her business, and keeping her time and her feeble energies sacred to the consummation of her works. Every hero she ever drew is said to be Lewes, in some light, and her novels all bear testimony to his aid on their dedication pages as well as on every page of their contents. The dedication of *Adam Bede* reads:

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“To my dear Husband, George Henry Lewes, I give this manuscript of a work which never would have been written but for the happiness which his love has conferred on my life.”

The *Mill on the Floss* bears this inscription :

“To my beloved Husband, George Henry Lewes, I give this MS. of my third book, written in this sixth year of our life together at Holly Lodge, South Field, Wandsworth, and finished 21st March, 1860.”

Romola is dedicated :

“To the Husband whose perfect love has been the best source of her insight and strength, this MS. is given by his devoted wife, the writer.”

The *Spanish Gypsy* reads :

“To my dear—every day dearer—Husband.”

Middlemarch :

“To my dear Husband, George Henry Lewes, in this nineteenth year of our blessed union.”

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And *Daniel Deronda* :

“To my dear Husband George Lewes.

‘For thy sweet love remembered such wealth
brings

That then I scorn to change my state with
kings.’ ”

These inscriptions seem her love’s best apology, if apology it needs. There is, however, on record for us, her letter of explanation, written some fourteen months after her union, to her dear friend, Mrs. Bray :

“If there is any one action or relation of my life,” she says, “which is, and always has been, profoundly serious, it is my relation to Mr. Lewes. . . . Light and easily broken ties are what I neither desire theoretically nor could live for practically. Women who are satisfied with such ties do not *act* as I have done. That any unworldly, unsuperstitious person who is sufficiently acquainted with the realities of life can pronounce my relation to Mr. Lewes immoral, I can only understand by remembering how subtle and complex are the influences that mould opinion. But I *do* remember this: that I indulge in no arro-

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gant or uncharitable thoughts about those who condemn us, even though we might have expected a somewhat different verdict. From the majority of persons, of course, we never looked for anything but condemnation. We are leading no life of self-indulgence, except, indeed, that, being happy in each other, we find everything easy. We are working hard to provide for others better than we provide for ourselves, and to fulfil every responsibility that lies upon us. Levity and pride would not be a sufficient basis for that."

They did, indeed, work hard and dispense unselfishly. She was a tender, generous, and idolized mother to Mr. Lewes's three sons, lavish to her own kindred—in fact, indulgent to every one but herself. For her, her wants were always few and simple in material things, and in things spiritual they were always comprehended in—Lewes! He was all in all to her, and she to him. He wrote of her:

"To know her was to love her, and since then my life has been a new birth. To her I owe all my prosperity and all my happiness."



HENRY D. THOREAU

From a daguerreotype taken in 1855



GEORGE ELIOT
At the age of thirty



GEORGE HENRY LEWES
From a photograph

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The world has always judged this union pretty harshly, not for itself, for it was its own vindication, but for its effect upon others ; but it was a supreme love ! Pity 'tis that no more worthy memorial of it has been given to the world. Of all the letters that must have passed between Miss Evans and Mr. Lewes before their marriage, and all the correspondence of husband and wife afterwards, there is public not a single trace ; and the three bulky volumes of George Eliot's journal and letters edited by Cross, is, for the major part, so dreary a chronicle, so "edited" of things vital (if there were any there !) and so maddeningly repetitious of the "headache refrain" as to be depressing in the last degree and not at all on a par with the charming literature written about George Eliot and Mr. Lewes by their friends and acquaintances. Moreover, the last days of her life, when the only charitable interpretation of her actions is to conclude

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that she was in her dotage, have been a sad distraction to many. Crushed to the very earth by the death of Lewes, in November, 1878, and only after months of desolate grief able to see even her most intimate friends, she was married on May 6, 1880, to a young man, more than young enough to have been her son. One wishes, fervently, that this chapter of the story might be left out entirely. In the well-nigh hopeless effort to make some excuse for it, many have suggested that after her anomalous position for four-and-twenty years, it was an inducement to George Eliot to be made a legal wife. I cannot think anything so foolish of her unless she had failed pitifully. Others suggest that a quarter century of such infinite tenderness, such close companionship as Lewes gave her, left her unfitted to live alone. Certainly she was always a most dependable creature, "unstable as water," as she said of herself, and need-

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ing upholding, encouraging, petting, comforting all the time, to keep her flagging spirits up. All this Lewes did for her, with a devotion that grew the stronger and tenderer with the passing years. When he was gone she was a broken reed, and leaned for support on the first strong and willing arm that offered itself. After all, that pitiful second marriage, with the childish happiness it brought her, is perhaps a most fitting commentary on her union with the man who made her what she was. Until she met him, until, in him, the voice of the divine bird began to sing in her wood, she was an uninspired and uninspiring woman whom much learning had unmade from the stature of a common woman, but not raised to the stature of one uncommon. Once heard, with her the bird-song was not intermittent, but continuous. Life was *not* "spun out of two strands," for she had nevermore to seek, only to hearken. Until a day

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when the voice of the bird was hushed, and life became a horrible groping through the wood, stark, intolerable. There is no noise more startling than the sudden cessation of all sound. In the "loud lonesomeness" of that awful hush, George Eliot toppled towards young Cross for support, but there *was* no support for her, thenceforth. She was married in May, she died in December of that same year and was buried in Highgate Cemetery, in the grave next to Mr. Lewes.

"And the little birds sang East, and the little
birds sang West,

Toll slowly !

And I smiled to think God's greatness flows
around our incompleteness,

Round our restlessness His rest !"

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI AND
“THE HOUSE OF LIFE”

RAPHAEL, Browning reminds us,
“made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view—but one, the
volume.”

And

“Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper ‘Beatrice.’”

And since them, as before them, every
man of fine feeling who has really loved
a woman has tried to do for her some-
thing out of the common run of his life,
something sacred to her, and her only.
If he is a book-keeper, living a life of

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“debit and credit” and “double entry,” he tries his awkward, fumbling hand at verse for his lady; and if he be a poet by calling, doubtless he tries, as Dante did, to paint her an angel. If he be a common man, he longs for one hour of uncommon gift, that therein he may fitly celebrate her who to his eyes is so very uncommon a woman. And if he be an uncommon man, an artist, he longs all the more yearningly when Love comes to him, for other means to express it than heretofore he has used in the expression of lesser emotions, for an audience less beloved. This shall be the story of a later Dante who, from painting angels and Madonnas, “made a century of sonnets” for a beloved woman, only unlike those which Raphael wrote for his lady, they were not lost, but have become immortal.

One day in 1850, or it may have been in 1849, Walter Howell Deverell, a young English painter, son of the secre-



D. G. Rossetti

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From the etching by S. Hollyer

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tary of the Government School of Design, on a visit with his mother to a milliner's shop saw a young girl of sixteen or thereabouts whose beauty attracted him to such a degree that he asked his mother to inquire if the young woman would not sit to him for a model. To this she agreed, and the lovely milliner's assistant, whose name was Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, entered upon an association with English art, as represented in one of the greatest schools known to art history, which is unique among women, and passed from this to an association with English letters not surpassed in interest and romantic quality by any woman in any time.

The girl whose beauty of person and beauty of mind, almost entirely unaided by any advantages of training, gave her this place in English art and letters, and who is celebrated in the oft-quoted sonnet beginning "Beauty like hers is genius," is described to us as having been

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“a most beautiful creature, with an air between dignity and sweetness, mixed with something which exceeded modest self-respect and partook of disdainful reserve; tall, finely formed, with a lofty neck, and regular yet somewhat uncommon features, greenish-blue unsparkling eyes, large, perfect eyelids, brilliant complexion, and a lavish heavy wealth of coppery-golden hair.” Mr. Deverell painted her as Viola, and introduced her to some of his artist friends, of whom Holman Hunt painted her as Sylvia, and Millais painted her as the drowning Ophelia,—no small claims on remembrance, in the light of the greatness in English art to which both these men attained. But it was left for Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, not only to immortalize Miss Siddal in countless paintings and poems, but first to inspire and then teach her so that she herself, the unlearned milliner’s girl, became both writer and painter of uncommon quality.

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Rossetti met Miss Siddal very shortly after she began to sit to Mr. Deverell, and almost immediately fell in love with her. He was then not quite twenty-two, but had done no little work destined to be imperishable. He had written a few poems, among them "The Blessed Damozel," which had been obscurely published, and he had painted, of his great pictures, "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin" and "The Annunciation," known also as "Ecce Ancilla Domini," perhaps the best known of all his paintings. He had made, too, a major part of his wonderful translations from Dante and other early Italian poets, though these, like the original verse of Rossetti, were not given to the public at large until after the lapse of a great many years.

The celebrated Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whereof Rossetti, Millais, and Holman Hunt were the originators, was in full power when Miss Siddal came upon the scene, and *The Germ*, that

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short-lived periodical which was to set forth the convictions of the Preraphaelites and convert an erring world to their faith, and which has since become one of the most-prized curiosities in the bibliographical world, was in the heyday of its exceedingly short life. *The Germ* gasped its last breath in April, 1850, with the publication of its fourth issue, and the Preraphaelite Brotherhood ceased to exist as an intimate coterie,—though its influence on English art was but as a seed sown on good soil—somewhere about 1851; thenceforward, comments William Michael Rossetti, brother of Dante Gabriel and one of the seven Preraphaelites, “the members got to talk less and less of Preraphaelism, the public more and more.” William Michael opines that his brother’s absorption in Miss Siddal may have had a good deal to do with the early dissolution of the Brotherhood, but it was more probably due to Millais’s election to the

Royal Academy, Woolner's departure to Australia, and Hunt's access of interest in other things. Moreover, it seems to be the law of life that these tense associations shall last, in their actual enjoyment, but a little time, the daily fact giving place to the nurtured memory, afterwards, perhaps, if memory keep love and longing alive, to be most blissfully recontinued some day, some where, when "we shall all be satisfied." At any rate, for an illumined year or two, the young Preraphaelites lived close together as men can and dreamed the same dreams of art and life and love, and enjoyed the rare felicity of communicating these dreams to one another and of assuring one another that if the world did not understand yet, it would presently. And it did! For a season the ardent young apostles walked on the mountain of transfiguring vision; then the call of the populous valleys came, first to one of them, then to an-

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other, but the transfiguration was not nullified by the descent, but transmuted into inspirational power which the art world will never cease to feel.

Whether Miss Siddal had anything to do with Rossetti's waning interest in the Brotherhood and in its literary expression, *The Germ*, or whether she simply came into his life at the opportune moment when those interests were relaxing their hold upon him, certain it is that when she came she brought with her the beginning of a new era in Rossetti's life which lasted until her death and which in any division, however superficial, of his life into periods, can only be characterized by her name.

Very soon after their meeting, Miss Siddal sat to Rossetti for a water-color head which he called "Rossovestita" (Redclad), and which he presented, in 1850, to Ford Madox Brown, the artist. Then he painted the first of many pictures of her as Beatrice, "Beatrice at a



MRS. DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (MISS SIDDAL.)

From a pencil drawing by Rossetti

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Marriage Feast denies Dante her Salutation," and thenceforth continued to paint from her nearly all the leading female personages of his pictures so long as she lived; but chiefly he painted her, many, many times, as Beatrice, in illustration of some passage or other from the *Vita Nuova*, whose story of a great romantic, or idealistic love, perhaps the greatest the world has ever known, played so dominant a part in Rossetti's life and inspired so large a part of his life's work. All that he read out of Dante in his profound and life-long studies of the great Italian, Rossetti interpreted by his love for Elizabeth Siddal, and Love lent such an illumination to his touch that Ruskin wrote to him,—

"I think Ida [a pet name of his for Miss Siddal] should be very happy to see how much more beautifully, perfectly, and tenderly you draw when you are drawing *her* than when you draw anybody else. She cures you of all your worst faults when you only look at her."

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But Rossetti was doing more than paint from Miss Siddal ; he was teaching her to paint and inspiring her to write, and helping her to find a market for her work ; he was introducing her to famous friends, notably Ruskin and Swinburne and Burne-Jones and William Morris and the Brownings ; he was watching over her solicitously, in her frail health ; and he was writing poems to her, which she only saw and whereof neither of them guessed the great and tragic history. He was doing for her everything that an ardent lover could do, except marry her. There were many reasons for their ten-year courtship ; the chief of them, perhaps, was a mere matter o' money, a very common complaint but no respecter of persons, for the mighty Tennyson himself had just ended an even longer wait for lovely Emily Sellwood for the same pounds-shillings-and-pence reason, and, indeed, most young men of letters have, in all times, delayed

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marriage on the same account, or, with all loving respect to the divinities in question, lived to wish that they had delayed for a season. Another cause for delay was in Miss Siddal's very poor health; over in quaint, Puritan Salem Love had recently brought healing to Sophia Peabody, who thereupon became Sophia Hawthorne, and in the case of Rossetti's and Miss Siddal's own friends, the Brownings, Love had done more for a frail and suffering woman than all the physicians could do.

But neither Love, nor the distractions of art, nor the most assiduous care of many rare friends, seemed to avail Miss Siddal much. She had the consumptive tendency characteristic of her peculiar style of fragile beauty, and whether the objection to marriage came from her or was due to a not unnatural hesitancy on Rossetti's part to take upon himself, with his slender means, the care of an invalid wife can never be known. Ros-

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setti was in some degree a self-pampered man and in many ways peculiarly averse to and unfitted for any yoke of responsibility, any adaptation of himself and his comings and goings to the tastes and requirements of another person. It may have been that with all his tenderness towards Miss Siddal through the ten years of their betrothal, with all his zeal in helping her to means and even going with her, for long periods at a time, in search of health to various resorts and quiet rest places, he hesitated to take the step which should bind him irrevocably to her and make his attendance on her not elective but inevitable, not the largess of a lover but the tribute of one under bond. Certainly, throughout those years, he was almost as much with her, did almost as much for her, shared his little almost as much with her as if she had been his wife ; certainly, he admired her exceedingly, and loved her, in his brother's words, " deeply and pro-

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fusely," and stayed not his hand from celebrating her beauty and his love in paintings and poems innumerable. Perhaps the artist in him was satisfied, as the artist sense so often is, with the *dream* of beauty and love, and too rapt therewith to reach forth an effective hand to make it a reality ; perhaps the man in him, not the artist, was self-indulgent, and craved, always, a little more of the lover's freedom, a little longer respite from the thousand and one obligations of a husband. The world will never know. It only knows that in May, 1860, after an engagement of ten years, Rossetti and Miss Siddal were married, she being at the time in very frail health. She lived until February, 1862, when she died, quite suddenly, of an overdose of laudanum, a drug which she used freely to ease her sufferings.

When she lay dead and ready for burial, Rossetti entered the room where the body was, and laid between her

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cheek and her beautiful hair a slender volume into which he had copied, at her instigation, all the poems he had written under the inspiration of her love. They were written to her and for her, and she must take them with her, he said, for they could not remain when she had gone. Moreover, he had spent much time, he remorsefully confessed, "writing at those poems when Lizzie was ill and suffering and I might have been attending to her, and now they shall go." He had been so engrossed with his celebration of the ideal love that he had allowed a thousand little expressions of the real love to go unmade while he toiled, raptly, at his Beatrices, his sonnets ; he had used the inspiration her love brought him not only to celebrate her, but to further his own claims to greatness ; these poems represented not only his own love for her, but his long-cherished hope of literary success ; they were nought to him now that she was

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gone ; they should go with her ; and they did ! When her body was interred, that day, in Highgate Cemetery, the little volume of poems was interred with it, and there, between her cheek and her gorgeous golden hair, had safe burial for over seven years, when the pleadings and urgings of Rossetti's friends were finally effective in getting his consent to a disinterment, and with the permission of the British Home Secretary the body of beautiful Elizabeth Rossetti was disturbed in its rest that the fruits of her Love might not perish with her but be given to the world. Was ever, in the history of poetry, a scene equal in tragic interest to that when a little knot of men, friends of Rossetti, gathered one night about the grave of his wife and watched, by the light of a fire built beside it, the disinterment of the coffin and its opening ? The body of Mrs. Rossetti is said to have been perfect, on coming to light, and there, where

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her husband had placed it, seven and a half years before, was the little book of poems, between her cheek and hair. Thence it was removed, most tenderly, reverently, and the frail, unheeding dust which had been guardian of it so long was reburied. In the spring of 1870 the poems were given to the public, and Elizabeth Eleanor Rossetti became immortalized as the heroine and inspiration of the greatest sonnet-sequence in the language, save only that of Shakespeare.

Perhaps, in those years of violent and unconsolable grief for her, while yet it satisfied his unenlightened sorrow to have the poems born of her love lie dead in her coffin, as her little, still-born baby girl lay dead in its coffin, unnamed, unknown of men, there came to Rossetti a remembrance, fraught with meaning, of what his great Dante had said and what he himself had translated thus :

“After writing this sonnet, it was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision : wherein I

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saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of this most blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more worthily concerning her. And to this end I labor all I can ; as she well knoweth. Wherefore if it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me yet a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which, may it seem good to Him who is the Master of Grace, that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady : to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance who is blessed forever.'"

Perhaps, thinking of Dante's "most blessed" Beatrice, and of her by whom he had interpreted "that blessed Beatrice" to modern generations, Rossetti came to understand that he might more worthily pay tribute to his lady than by burying his poems, with his ambition, in her coffin. Death had no power to remove Dante's lady from his life and love ; death only made her the more peculiarly his, to love and live for up to

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the full limit of which his soul was capable. And so far from death removing his obligations of devotion to her, or removing the possibility of his discharging them, it only made them infinitely greater, to the wonderful Florentine. Perhaps Rossetti, poor, anguished Rossetti, in the blackness of his grief, realized this. Perhaps he had a vision, even as Dante had, and perhaps he saw therein his lady, sitting among many elect ladies beloved of good men, and with them Dante's Beatrice and Petrarch's Laura, and Michael Angelo's lovely Vittoria Colonna, and many another, whose glory, in heaven, is the quality of love they have transmitted on earth, the heroism and sweetness and splendor of the things done among men by virtue of the love they have felt and inspired. And perhaps Rossetti saw that while Beatrice tenderly loved and cherished the unfinished angel which Dante had once prepared to paint for her, she

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gloried most exceedingly in the poems which, breathing love for her in every line, he had given to the world and therein marked the most supreme, celestial passion ever recorded among men. Perhaps it took seven long years for the idea to dawn in Rossetti's mind that if a woman be a good woman, and worthy of all honor and love, while she hugs to her mortal spirit every little evidence of her lover's supreme and exclusive interest in her, she exults, in her immortal spirit, over every evidence he gives her that his devotion to her, her answering devotion to him, has made him not less to all the rest of his world, but more, MORE, MORE! This, ever, shall be the measurement of Love: *not* how much it can take from all and concentrate in one, but how much it can take from one and give to all.

Rossetti, vainly imagining through seven years that he had been paying the utmost tribute to his lady in not

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caring what became of the poems written to her, since she was dead and could no longer glory in them, may have read those concluding lines of the *Vita Nuova* some day for the thousandth time, and gleaned therefrom, in a flash of knowledge, that he was paying not the highest but the meanest tribute to his love who, perhaps, hung her head, in the company of the Beata Beatrix she had so often been painted to represent, for that the lover of Beata Beatrix held his head so high, remembering the glory of his lady and hoping to "write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman," while the lover of Elizabeth Rossetti made pastime, in his morbid melancholy, of collecting old china, leaving the sonnets her love had inspired dry-rotting in the grave. Surely, if there is a blessed something that souls in Paradise may do for us in the way of benediction and attraction, there is still something we may do for them in the

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honor we do to the spirit wherewith their association charged us?

In one of the most familiar of his sonnets, Rossetti expresses his pride and delight in painting her :

“ Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this !)
They that would look on her must come to me.”

But greater glory than this might he have claimed for himself, her lover ; if he could have foreseen the future of the wonderful sonnets he might well have said, “ They that would read of Love, must learn of her.” For nothing quite like the ideal of love Rossetti found in Miss Siddal and celebrated in his sonnets to her exists elsewhere in poetry or in men’s records of Love. As an ideal it has been attacked as gross, it has been exalted as nearly Divine, it has seemed, to some, as aloofly mystic as the “ Song of Solomon,” and to others it has seemed as supremely sensuous as

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that same "Song of Solomon" seems to some. But none has it failed to attract and thrill, with the world-old power of a great passion to compel great awe.

It is the most grievous of aggravations to touch on "The House of Life" in a paragraph. Volumes have been written about the sonnets, and volumes of commentary might almost be written on any one of them—not that they need elucidation, but that they present such deeply and widely significant phases of Love. The key to Rossetti's conception of Love lies, perhaps, in the sonnet "Heart's Hope," as much as in any one thing that he wrote, especially in the last four lines of the octette :

"For lo ! in some poor rhythmic period,
Lady, I fain would tell how evermore
Thy soul I know not from the body, nor
Thee from myself, neither our love from God."

And the universality of his sonnets' appeal may well have come in answer to his "Heart's Hope" :

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“Yea, in God’s name, and Love’s, and thine,
would I
Draw from one loving heart such evidence
As to all hearts all things shall signify.”

But to one reader, at least, the most
exquisite of all Rossetti’s many characterizations of Love is in the sonnet,
“Heart’s Haven” :

“Sometimes she is a child within mine arms,—
Cowering beneath dark wings that love must
chase,—
With still tears showering and averted face,
Inexplicably filled with faint alarms :
And oft from mine own spirit’s hurtling harms
I crave the refuge of her deep embrace,—
Against all ills the fortified strong place
And sweet reserve of sovereign countercharms.

“And Love, our light at night and shade at noon,
Lulls us to rest with songs, and turns away
All shafts of shelterless, tumultuous day.
Like the moon’s growth, his face gleams through
his tune ;
And as soft waters warble to the moon,
Our answering spirits chime one roundelay.”

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“And Love, our light at night and shade at noon!” What supreamer, sweeter standard has been set for Love than this? So many err in making Love always the pillar of fire, not in the desert night alone, but in the noonday of the sand-wastes as well; and others make a shelter of Love, a shade, but no glow, no glory, no aid to night marches through uncharted and infested leagues.

Great the glory of the man who has known Love as both light and shade, and great the tender glory of the woman who has revealed it to him!

THE LONG, LONG FAITHFULNESS OF HONORÉ DE BALZAC

ON one of the early spring days in the year 1819, a worthy matron of the provinces, a Touranian lady of the upper middle class, made an exploration into one of the poorer quarters of Paris. It was a neighborhood where the laboring people and humbler tradesfolk had their homes, and madame, stepping daintily, not to say gingerly, picked her way among the crowded tenements inquiring for a room to rent. At length, in the garret of the house No. 9 Rue Lesdiguieres, she found what would answer the purpose, a small attic room so 'croached upon by the sloping eaves that little furniture would suffice to fill it. It was a dark little hole, so dark that its new tenant came

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to complain that his oil cost him more than his bread ; but it was close by that magnificent library, the Bibliotheque de l'Arsenal, and so it was engaged, and to it madame presently sent a bed, a table, a few chairs, all of the rudest sort, and soon there came the new tenant, a youth of twenty, who had disdained the profession of law, after a long apprenticeship, and who so irritated his worthy parents by his foolish desire to make a business of writing books that the result of vain pleadings with him and anxious councils between themselves was this exile to a garret where he might try the literary life for a while on a starvation allowance. Nothing daunted, the lad moved into his eyrie and became, to his infinite delight, the master of his own movements, with none to inquire of him why or whither. His days he spent in the library, his nights in laborious composition. How he had come by the desire to write it is hard to say, for

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he had been rated but a dullard at school, and he wrote with great difficulty, nor showed any originality in his choice of themes. But write he would, and did. After some eight or nine months of his new life he wrote to his mother :

“ You ask for news. I shall have to manufacture it ; no one sets foot in my garret. I can only tell you a lot of items about myself ; for instance : A fire broke out Rue Lesdiguieres, No. 9, in the head of a poor lad, and no engines have been able to put it out. It was kindled by a beautiful woman whom he does not know. They say she lives at the Quatre-Nations, the other side of the Pont des Arts ; she is called Fame. Unfortunately the burned youth reasons ; he says to himself : ‘ Either I have or I have not genius ; in either case I am laying up a store of sorrows. Without genius, I am done for. I must then pass my life in feeling desires I cannot satisfy, in miserable envy, cruel pain. With genius, I shall be persecuted, calumniated ; and I know very well that Mademoiselle Fame will have to wipe away abundant tears.’ ”

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It was true ; she did ! The two great longings of his life were for love and fame, and the realization of both came to him only with bitter and abundant tears. But the ardor which did not flinch in an attic, neither failed him in the face of what poor Byron called "the martyrdom of fame," and through fifteen months of real privation, of winter snows that filtered through his leaky roof and lay in patches on his thinly-covered bed, and of blistering summer heat, he worked away on his tragedy called *Cromwell*, which was to justify, in the eyes of his family and friends, his choice of a career. During those months it was understood by his friends that he was away on a visit, and he was not allowed to visit his home. If ever a boy had a bitter dose administered to cure him of the writing fever that boy was Honoré de Balzac, but he wrote to his mother : "I am not sick of my hardships—I love them." There was the

world of books, close by ; there was the world of human nature, all around ; there was the city of the great and little dead, not far away ; and there was the world of Paris, glittering, capricious Paris, which he meant to conquer, observable from his garret window, the watch-tower of his young hopefulness whence his wistful eyes might overlook the Promised Land. When he was not reading or writing, he spent much time sitting on that height in Pere-Lachaise where, later, he was to find his last resting-place, and pondering the pages of human history as suggested to his mind by the gravestones. There he sat and dreamed of great men,—La Fontaine, Masséna, Molière, “names that tell all and make the passer dream ;” and there he sat and pondered over the graves of little men, a great army of the unknown whose names told nothing, yet each of them a man of destiny, a maker of history, a sharer of the universal experi-

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ences of his kind. To know how those little men had felt! To realize their ambitions, their sorrows, their triumphs, and their joys, ah! that were to make one a great man, to rank him with Molière, Racine, La Fontaine, to make of his name, some day, such an *épitaph* as should set the passer-by to dreaming.

From the still heights of the city of the dead Balzac would return to his teeming faubourg where the little man abode, where was his arena of little struggles and little triumphs, and there Balzac studied him,—grocer, baker, butcher, laborer, wine-merchant, and his wife and sons and daughters. Back in Pere-Lachaise the lowly headstones of the multitude no longer confronted him as enigmas; he was beginning to know what hopes and fears, what system of reckoning profit and loss those men had known who lay there; and standing on that commanding height whence all Paris can be seen, the hope-illuminated youth could

exclaim, "The world is mine, for I understand it!"

When *Cromwell* was done, Balzac put it in his pocket, turned the key in the door of his attic, and returned to his father's house, prepared to bring the very consternation of surprise to those who had scoffed at his literary aspirations. A gathering of friends was assembled, the parlors were filled with the eager, the incredulous. Honoré produced *Cromwell* and began to read, but the tense silence of rapt listening soon became charged with a subtle something all too unmistakably disaffection; the ardent reader felt it long before he had finished; in the faces of some, as he looked up, was an anguish of commiseration, in the faces of others was, rather, a triumphant scorn, an exultant "I-told-you-so." The tragedy was almost a farce, it was so poorly done. Surely, now, the misguided youth would regret the legal opportunity he had thrown away. To come

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back success-crowned, no matter how swinishly one may have lived in the interval, is to invite no comparison with the prodigal ; but to come back empty-handed, after effort never so noble, is to entitle the neighborhood, in its own opinion, to pronounce judgment on the ne'er-do-well and offer condolences to his parents. But Balzac was not daunted. "Tragedies are not in my line, that's all," said he, and returned to work, but not to the garret. Fifteen months of privation there had so reduced him, physically, that his mother would not let him return. He might be very obstinate and very foolish, but he was her boy, and she kept him at home where, in spite of her solicitous care, he was not so happy as in his garret, with Pere-Lachaise and the library close by. It was at home, during the next five years, that he wrote ten novels, in forty volumes, all of which he published under pseudonyms ; they were written "to

get his hand in," as part of his literary apprenticeship, but he never acknowledged any of them. In those years he was not only forcing a facility and finish with the pen, but was making "studies" for many of the portraits which afterwards made him famous, just as he had made similar studies in his poor Paris faubourg. But it was the bread of dependence he ate, and he was far from happy. His father maintained a calm indifference towards his writing, as towards something to be endured if it could not be cured; but his mother, notwithstanding her anxious care of him, seems to have exercised it in a way quite galling to him. She was a woman willing enough to be kind, but it must be at her own time, in her own way, and both time and way had a fatality for being ill-chosen, with her famous son in particular. He begged for an allowance of fifteen hundred francs a year, a mere beggar's pittance, that he might return

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to his garret ; but independence was the one thing Madame Balzac had the least relish for granting to any one over whom she esteemed herself nominated to rule, and the request was persistently refused. It was during these years that Honore wrote to his sister, then married and living at some distance :

“ Ah, if something would cast a charm over my cold existence ! I have no flowers in my life, and yet I am at the season when they bloom. What good will fortune or enjoyments do me when my youth is gone ? Why wear the clothes of the actor if we never play the rôle ? The old man is one who has dined and looks on to see others eat, but as for me, I am young, my plate is empty, and I hunger ! Lauré, Lauré, my two immense and sole desires,—*to be famous and to be loved*,—will they ever be satisfied ? ”

It was not the hunger for fame and for love alone that made miserable those years under the parental rooftree, it was the hunger for independence, a gnawing desire for money, which eventually drove

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Balzac into a series of unfortunate, nay, literally disastrous business ventures, from the accumulated back-sets of which he was many years, almost a lifetime, in recovering. In 1827 Balzac, with nothing yet placed to his credit in a literary way and one hundred and twenty thousand francs of business debts, again launched himself on the uncertain sea of Paris literary life. He was in his twenty-ninth year, and had earned for himself, besides his debts, the reputation of being incapable ; every one so regarded him, and no project could have had a worse recommendation to careful persons than his interest in it, although many of his pet projects afterwards justified his acumen and showed that his ill-success was less from lack of ability than from lack of reputation of ability. It was this habit of judging him a failure that made him, when he returned to Paris, turn his back on the Rue Lesdiguieres and set himself up with all the air of fashion and compe-

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tence he could assume in the Rue de Tournon, where he prepared to make his first avowed venture in print. Thenceforth Balzac always defied the world's condolence by living in luxury, the price of which he was forever earning, long after it was due, by such prodigious labors with the pen as no man ever put forth, before or since. With the publication, in 1829, of the *Chouans*, celebrity came to Balzac at one bound ; it brought him into the society of many charming and exalted persons, and attracted to him the attention of critics and publishers ; but he had still a long way to go ere he was justified in the eyes of his early friends and the friends of his family, nor was he, from the first, disappointed in his expectation that fame would have to wipe away abundant tears. Book now followed book from his pen with a rapidity that earned him that despised title, "the most prolific of our novelists," as if he ground out his work as a mill



HONORÉ DE BALZAC

From the portrait in the Museum at Tours

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grinds out flour. The world had no conception of the wearying unrest, the relentless energy, the grim determination that lay behind all these volumes pouring hot from the workshop of a Titan who had suffered restraint too long and now had but one desire, to achieve, to achieve, to achieve! Eighteen hours a day he would work, this Titan, and that day after day, and week after week, even month in and month out, burying himself alive from all the world and sitting at his writing until it became a marvel how human strength, no matter how great, could be equal to it.

Back of all this there was more than an artist's energy merely, more even than the grim determination of a man who had a reputation of non-success to retrieve; he took pains that none should ever know just what this spurring pain of his early life had been, but from little half-allusions, from reading between the lines, one gathers, beyond a doubt, that

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it was a love-affair; that some girl on whom he had set his hopes, some woman on whom he had hung the rose-colored garment of his ideality, had spurned him as ill-to-do. To the Duchess d'Abrantes, whose friendship he had won early in his career as an author, he wrote, about 1830,—

“You may question all about me and you will never gain any light on the cause of my unhappiness. Some there are who die, and the physician himself is unable to discover what malady has carried them off.”

But in the same letter he wrote to her, concerning her own confessed unhappiness,—

“You are unhappy, you say, and without the hope of another dawn; but remember that in the soul are many spring-tides and fresh mornings. . . . How many human beings have renewed their lives and made them beautiful and sweet when farther on in life than you are now. All we are is in the soul; are you certain that yours has had its full development? Do you breathe in air

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through every pore of it? Do your eyes see all they can see?"

It was this renewal of soul, in wonderful degree, by the continual breathing-in of new life through every pore that kept Balzac from withering under disappointment, and made it, full of anguish as it seems to have been, of benefit to him instead of detriment. He wrote in his first letter to Madame Hanska,—

“My fate is to paint the happiness that others feel; to desire it in perfection, but never to meet it. None but those who suffer can paint joy, because we better express that which we conceive than that we have experienced.”

Whatever Balzac's suffering in this affair, it certainly taught him a great deal, and that in the way of adding fuel to the fire of his energies and his ideals. Instead of losing faith in women, he seems to have learned his need of them, and their power to comfort and inspire; and, instead of reviling the one

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who caused his unhappiness, he enshrined her in one of his earliest great novels; and of her he wrote to a dear woman friend, "For me *Pauline* (in the *Peau de Chagrin*) lives—even more beautiful. If I have made her a vision, an illusion, it is that none may possess my secret." Theophile Gautier, who knew Balzac intimately for more than fifteen years, and who has left the best sketch of him extant, says that "only once did Balzac make allusion, in the tenderest and most respectful terms, to an attachment of his early youth; and even then he only told me the first name of the woman whose memory, after so many years, brought the moisture to his eyes." Balzac's sister is silent on this episode, evidently out of respect to her brother's wishes, and he himself has left no further record of it than is contained in a few allusions. We wish we might know what became of the woman, and whether her very famous lover eventu-

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ally became a hero to her, but this is a sealed page that none may read. All that we may reasonably conclude from it, out of a general knowledge of human nature and a careful study of Balzac's nature, is that this girl-love (for she seems to have belonged to his very early youth, probably before his twenty-third year) evidently had not a little to do with inciting him to ambitious effort. It was but a little while, however, before he came to see that, even as he, a dreaming boy, had expected, fame can never satisfy. He wrote to Madame Carraud in June, 1832,—

“Something irresistibly impels me to seek fame and power. It is not a happy life. Within me is the worship of woman, and a need of love which has never yet been completely satisfied. Despairing of ever being loved and understood by the woman of whom I dreamed, never having met her but under one form in my heart, I desire to fling myself into the whirlpool of political passions as I have done into the lurid and parching atmosphere of literary ambition. I may fail in both, but, be-

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lieve me, if I do seek to live in the life of the century, instead of passing through it obscure and happy, it is precisely because pure and unpretending happiness has failed me. . . . To devote myself to the happiness of a woman has been my ceaseless dream; and I suffer because I have not realized it."

If he devoted himself to the happiness of no woman, however, it was not from lack of opportunity. Believing, as he did, that woman is the transmitter of inspiration to man, and voicing his belief in books, he soon became a centre of ardent interest to thousands of women who saw new hope for their kind in his conviction that woman is man's link with the Divine. He believed in men as the world's workers, and in women as the soul of men, at once their inspiration, their guides, their comforters, in view of which high and holy calling women should hold themselves very priestesses of God, keeping close to all truth and beauty, and pure of all harshness, ma-

terialism, sham. As much as Goethe set forth the saving power of pure woman-love in the last act of *Faust*, or as Wagner set it forth in the last act of *Tannhäuser*, so Balzac strove to set it forth in all he did ; and nothing in all his life fraught with pain hurt him more than the misunderstanding of those who did not, *would* not see that when he painted mean women, vicious women, unilluminated women, it was because they are comprehended in the *Comédie Humaine*, and because he hoped, by painting them in their true and revolting colors, to raise his loudest cry against the horror of womanhood debased.

This tenderness for womankind, this exalted idea of her mission, made him a perfect prophet to the women of his time. Postal communication was not so easy in those days as now ; writing to authors was a custom far less common ; but it is said that during the twenty-odd years of his career as a writer Balzac

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received from women alone between ten and twelve thousand letters. One day, in February, 1833, when he was not quite thirty-four, he found at his publisher's, among a lot of letters addressed to him there, one bearing the Odessa post-mark. It was from a young Polish countess married to a Russian gentleman, and living on her husband's vast estate in the Ukraine province of Russia. There, in her lonely isolation from the hurrying currents of life, Balzac's books had fallen athwart her long, wistful days, and given her both diversion and inspiration, both good company and good counsel. She wrote to thank him, and signed herself "l'Etrangere" (Foreigner). Now, few persons write anonymously to an author, unless to blame; and so far from leaving the matter of a reply impossible, most unknown correspondents strive to make it imperative. Perhaps it was the modesty of his Russian friend that first attracted the grate-

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ful notice of Balzac ; perhaps it was the distance the letter came that caught his fancy and tickled his pride ; perhaps it was neither of these things, but the simple, sincere tone of the letter, appreciative in that subtle, delicate way that so abundantly pleases, and not in the blunt, bungling way that is often more irritating than blame ; at any rate, whatever its charm, the letter pleased him, and he had a strong desire to know how he might reach his unknown correspondent in reply. For her letter had not been all honeyed praise ; she deplored the tone of his latest book as a sad departure from the lines whereon he had made his strong appeal to her ; and as Balzac was just about to publish his *Contes Drolâtiques*, which he rightly conjectured would cause her even more offence than *La Peau de Chagrin*, he was anxious to communicate with her in his own defence. There was, however, nothing to do but to trust time or chance

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to reveal to him his correspondent's identity. At length, to his great delight, came another letter from l'Etrangere. Just how often she wrote thus, seeking no reply, cannot be said, as Balzac destroyed her letters to him, not at the time of their receipt, but all at once, in a general holocaust, in 1847.

Vicomte de Spoelberch de Louvenjoul, Balzac's chief bibliographer, claims to have two letters of l'Etrangere which escaped destruction, and which he published in that maddeningly misleading book, *Un Roman d'Amour*, a tissue of unauthenticated and unauthenticatable hypotheses whose feeble hazards, garbled half-truths, and crass mis-statements must ever make it a stumbling-block to superficial students of Balzac's life; but the conservative inquirer will scarcely attach any importance to these two published letters, especially since M. de Louvenjoul is free to admit that neither of them is in l'Étrangere's hand-



MADAME BALZAC (MADAME HANSKA)
From a miniature

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writing; that the language is obscure, and that nothing in the tone of the letters seems to justify Balzac's intense interest in their writer. There is only the more than doubtful authority of these letters for the story that l'Etrangere, anxious at length to know how her letters were received, made a request that Balzac insert a personal notice in *La Quotidienne*, using his initials and those of her *nom de plume*, in which he might tell her of the receipt of her missives sent to him at his publisher's. Whether he did this or not we cannot certainly know, for we have not his first letter to her, and do not know how the correspondence between Balzac and his avowed admirer, Madame Evelina Hanska, was inaugurated. All that we do know is that in September, 1833, M. Venceslas de Hanski having a villa at Neuchatel, Balzac went there, by invitation, for a visit of four or five days, and there made the acquaintance of the lady

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who, nearly eighteen years later, was to become his wife. Tradition still points out, in the little Swiss town, the public promenade where the high-born Polish lady and the great French novelist met, after the beginning of mutual interest through the medium of the post. There is a letter, purporting to have been written by Balzac to his sister, giving an account of this meeting. Unfortunately, like everything else that M. de Louvenjoul has put forth about this celebrated relationship, this letter (about which clusters more argument, on which hinges more judgment, than appertains, one thinks, to any other letter ever published!) is open to very serious charges of spuriousness ; part of it is given by his sister in her memoir of him, and the same part of M. de Louvenjoul's published whole appears in the Definitive Edition of Balzac's Correspondence ; the rest, on the revelations of which part of the world bases its charge of Balzac's ribald vil-

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lainy, was never heard of until six years ago (1896), when it made its noxious appearance in company with those other strange documents for which M. de Lovenjoul—most incredible man!—alone stands responsible, in contradiction of the testimony of those who knew Balzac best, and have best right to be believed about him.

Thus it comes about that no very exact estimate can ever be made of a love-story which is at once one of the most romantic and one of the most noble in literary or any other history. The letters of Madame Hanska being destroyed, we can judge her only by the quality of Balzac's replies to her, and in so doing we suffer a twofold disadvantage,—first, that M. de Louvenjoul has put forth a so evidently garbled edition of Balzac's letters to her as to make it difficult for us to know what, among them, is genuine and what is spurious ; and, second, that Balzac was

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so thoroughly an idealist, and lived so far from Madame Hanska, seeing her only semi-occasionally, that his letters would naturally present the woman of his dreams as he conceived Madame Hanska to realize them, rather than the woman of fact, as she really was. In addition to these things, Balzac's life-long habit of guarding all that appertained to his intimate life from the public took so decided an air of secretiveness with regard to this great relationship that there is much of the story that, perforce, remains, and probably must ever remain, subject to conjecture.

What is certain, however, is that Balzac's unknown correspondent of February, 1833, was to play a great part in his life. She was a young woman of twenty-seven, of no little beauty, and belonging to a noble Polish family with many highly distinguished connections. At a very early (according to our Western notions, a barbarously early) age,

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the young Countess Evelina was married, for reasons of family policy, to an enormously wealthy but quite elderly Russian gentleman, M. de Hanski, with vast estates, in extent and richness like a great principality, in the Ukraine province of his country. He was an estimable gentleman, devoted to the care of his landed interests, commendably fond of his young wife, and sympathetic with her in the loss, in early infancy, of four out of their five children. But M. de Hanski was a busy man, and the great villa which was his home was a long way from any other dwelling save those of his serfs. Time dragged with the young chatelaine, even although she had many bookish interests and was passionately devoted to the care of her little daughter. Into this far-away Russian atmosphere full, at once, in true Russian style, of dazzling splendors and incredible barbarisms, came the wonderful, vivid novels of the

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French Titan, teeming with pictures of the great world, and full of persons of many types so marvellously drawn as to seem alive,—aye, more alive than the actual men and women one encounters in a day's routine. It must, we can readily realize, have seemed wonderful to sit in distant Russia and come in touch with that wizard mind, living in gay, human Paris with its multitude of shifting lights and shades, and knowing them, feeling them, *living* them, every one, till they fell from the point of his indefatigable pen with a vividness that fairly startled Europe.

And he, on his part! What was he like, to whom came those letters from an unknown that so took hold on him from among the thousands of his unknown women correspondents that they came almost to govern his life? In what did he differ from the lad of the faubourg garret fifteen years before? Fame had not greatly altered him;

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there was the same stern devotion to work, the same keen interest in details of little men and mighty, the same determination to succeed, to keep on succeeding ; the same struggle to keep pace with his debts. His celebrity was the open sesame to doors of every kind, and of it he took advantage mainly for his art's furtherance, though there were a few exceptions, a few friends he really loved, a few whose admiration gave him joy. The many, however, he could never care for, except as he cared for all the component parts of the *Comédie Humaine* ; as types they delighted him, but as intimates, except for purposes of study, he would have none of them. For one thing, he couldn't ; as he had to be forever pointing out, he had no time ; a man cannot write half a dozen books a year and have leisure left for social pleasures ; when he is not writing he must be gathering for distillation, making ready to win new triumphs, and not giving him-

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self over to the enjoyment of old ones. And for another thing, he had learned, in those years of unsupported struggle, how to do without the world; he had acquired the habits of the solitary, the devotee, and he could not, with the coming of fame, become a social being on the instant. No one had wanted aught of him in those days when he was the dreaming ne'er-do-well, every whit as good a man as now, though unacclaimed. Very well! he wanted naught of any one, now that fame had brought him the opportunity to work and be independent.

In the stead of a garret, Balzac now lived and worked in a beautiful apartment, where he gathered around him many treasures of art, and where he maintained a cloistered habit of life almost or altogether impossible to break in upon. Very often he was away from Paris, no one knew where, gathering material for new books, or occasionally chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of some

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fatuous financial scheme whereby he might recoup his fortunes in a single stroke. When in Paris, Balzac was not often seen in public, save at the opera or going to or from his publisher's with proofs,—usually his only exercise. He entrenched himself at home, where, to reach his privacy, a comical system of passwords was necessary. He went to bed at six in the evening, and rose at midnight, working, frequently, without stopping save to swallow a bit of something brought to him and to drink copious draughts of black coffee, for the whole eighteen hours; the labor of composition, but more particularly the labor of revision, which he practised to an enormous degree, cost him so much. Thus Balzac lived and worked, and all the best testimonies bear abundant witness to the monastic purity and abstemiousness of his life. While working he always wore the white serge habit of the Dominican monks girded about him

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with a silken cord, sometimes with a gold chain, and cut away from his short, bull-like but beautifully white neck, and falling loosely away from his exquisite hands, of which he was childishly proud. Balzac was very short of stature and stockily built, with a magnificent, leonine head, a vast, noble, white brow, a shock of raven-black hair thrown back like a mane, a nose fully indicative of his originality and power, and, as Theophile Gautier says,—

“As to the eyes, there were never any like them; they had a life, a light, an inconceivable magnetism; the white of the eyeballs was pure, limpid, with a bluish tinge like that of an infant or a virgin, inclosing two black diamonds, dashed at moments with gold reflections,—eyes to make an eagle drop his lids, eyes to read through walls and into bosoms, or to terrify furious wild beasts; the eyes of a sovereign, a seer, a subjugator.”

Lamartine said of him,—

“The dominant expression of his face, greater even than that of intellect, was the manifestation

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of goodness and kindheartedness. He won your mind when he spoke, but he won your heart when he was silent. No feeling of envy or hatred could have been expressed by that face ; it was impossible that it should seem otherwise than kind. But the kindness was not that of indifference ; it was loving kindness conscious of its meaning and conscious of others ; it inspired gratitude and frankness, and defied all those who knew him not to love him.”

George Sand wrote,—

“I never heard him say an evil word of any one. He went his painful way with a smile in his soul.”

She also says, in this same article on Balzac,—

“To say of a man of genius that he was essentially good and kind is the highest praise that I am able to bestow. All superiority must contend with so many obstacles and sufferings that the man who pursues his mission of genius with patience and gentleness is a great man, whatever meaning we may give to the term. Patience and gentleness are strength ; none was ever stronger than Balzac.”

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Now, with regard to the love of women, men are of two classes,—those who have no particular or well-defined ideal of womanhood until some woman creates one for them in herself, and those who entertain a quite definite ideal, long cherished, which some woman mayhap eventually realizes to them. Naturally, the latter class stand the least likelihood of meeting happiness and the least likelihood of maintaining it, yet they are, strange to say, the most loyal men in the world, even when least happy in their loyalty. Men have been known to find their ideal in one woman, and then, subsequently, to find it in another quite her opposite. But men who have loved their ideal long before they ever met the woman who embodied or seemed to them to embody it, have usually been faithful men, subject to no variation, true till death. Just why, is for the psychologist to say; but every lay reader and observer can confirm the

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fact abundantly out of his own experience. Honoré de Balzac had long entertained an ideal of a Beatrice who should lead him, by the hand of Love, through the mysteries of Things Eternal. The degrees by which he came to recognize that Beatrice in Madame Hanska, and to believe her such to the end, in spite of discouragements many and severe, is an interesting chapter, perhaps the most interesting, in the psychology of a great mind, the history of a great heart. In the first letter of his to her that we have preserved he says,—

“Perhaps you will never receive anything from me again, and the friendship you have created may be like a flower perishing unknown in the depths of a wood by a stroke of lightning. Know, at least, that it was true, and sincere; you are, in a young and stainless heart, what every woman must desire to be,—respected and adored. Have you not shed a perfume on my hours? Do I not owe to you one of those encouragements which make us accept hard toil, the drop of water in the desert?”

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That is as much as we have any reason to suppose she was to him during the earliest stages of their romantic acquaintance. In the letter following he avows his early love affair :

“Ties eternal and ties broken ! Do not blame me. You ask me how we can love, live, and lose each other while still loving. That is a mystery of life of which you know nothing as yet, and I hope you never may know it. In that sad destiny, no blame can be attached except to fate ; there are two unfortunates, but they are two irreproachable unfortunates. There is no fault to absolve because there is no cause to blame. I cannot add another word.”

But he does ; he says,—

“As all my passions, all my beliefs are defeated, as my dreams are dispersed, I am forced to *create myself* passions, and I choose that of art. I live in my studies. I wish to do better. I weigh my phrases and my words as a miser weighs his bits of gold. What love I thus waste ! What happiness is flung to the winds ! My laborious youth, my long studies will not have the sole reward I desired for them. Ever since I have breathed

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and known what a pure breath coming from pure lips was, I have desired the love of a young and pretty woman ; yet all has fled me ! A few years more and youth will be a memory ! . . . And certainly in a few years the recollections of youth will bring me no joys. And then, what hope that I could obtain at forty that which I have missed at twenty ? She who is averse to me, being young, will she be less reluctant then ? ”

It is in this same letter that he addresses Madame Hanska as—

“ You whom I caress as an illusion, who are in my dreams like a hope, and who have so graciously embodied my reveries. You do not know what it is to people the solitude of a poet with a gentle figure, the form of which attracts by the very vagueness which the indefinite lends it. ”

In the next letter he tells her—

“ You do not know how dangerous it is to a lively imagination and a heart misunderstood, a heart full of rejected tenderness, to behold thus nebulously a young and beautiful woman. . . . If you knew with what force a solitary soul whom no one wants springs toward a true affection ! I love you, unknown woman, and this fantastic

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thing is only the natural effect of a life that is empty and unhappy. . . . I am like a prisoner who, in the depths of his dungeon, hears the sweet voice of a woman. He puts all his soul into a faint yet powerful perception of that voice, and after his long hours of revery, of hopes, after voyages of imagination, the woman, young and beautiful, kills him, so complete would be the happiness. You will think this folly; it is the truth, and far below the truth, because the heart, the imagination, the romance of the passions of which my works give an idea, are very far below the heart, the imagination, the romance of the man. And I can say this without conceit, because all those qualities are to me misfortunes. After all, no one attaches himself with greater love to the poesy of this sentiment at once so chimerical and so true. It is a sort of religion, higher than earth, less high than heaven. I like often to turn my eyes toward these unknown skies, in an unknown land, and gather some new strength by thinking that *there* may be sure reward for me, when I do well."

We may conclude that Madame Hanska was gratified by this poetic devotion. For one thing, she can scarcely

have repulsed it, for she kept on writing ; and even had she written in chiding of it, it is doubtful if Balzac would have continued to express his admiration as he did. Moreover, the lady arranged a meeting, which also goes to prove that the great novelist's attraction was a source of interest to her. There is, as we have said, only the inferential testimony deducible from Balzac's replies to her letters to tell us anything about her attitude towards him, and we can only conjecture why he had no sooner communicated with her and begun to express his delight in their correspondence than she set about accusing him, hinting vague suspicions of him, openly charging him with rumors she had heard, lamenting his popularity in gay Paris, where he could scarcely be true to a fair unknown in distant Russia. Naturally, she wanted to know, in their first intercourse, where he had obtained the coloring for his pictures of the squalid and the gilded

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vice of Paris and the provinces ; it mattered a great deal to her to know whether he wrote out of a loose, profligate experience, or whether he had observed those unlovely phases of life as a philosophical on-looker only ; and she wanted to know how he made his studies of good women and their love. Any woman, deeply interested in a man, wants to know what his morals are, what stand he takes on the battle-field of human passions, what associations he allows himself, what are his principles, and what his ideals. These are keys to his life, his character, lacking which she must forever remain a stranger to him, one far removed from the real issues of his soul. Madame Hanska's initial curiosity on these points is not only justifiable, it is altogether womanly and proper. But her continued challenges to him seem more than unwarrantable to us, even in the light of the multitude of baseless fabrications about

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him that circulated far beyond Paris and throughout all Europe. The dignity and integrity of the man as his later letters revealed him, his patience and perseverance, and the opportunities for knowledge her acquaintance with him offered her should have made her querulous questionings impossible. It seems as if she had no faith in her poor knight. His letters to her are not less than heart-breaking in their never-varying plaint of labor, pitiless, driving labor. He tries to make them gay for her, to sketch the personalities of the Parisian world, to tell her about the artistic and social celebrities, to give her an account of his simple goings and comings, to keep her in touch with his work, stage by stage; but the minor note of the weary man is under all, like a tired sob. Necessity compels him to be so far from her whom, as the years go by, he has come to look to as his one kindred soul; and often he cannot even

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take time to write to her, for that his publishers are threatening him with law-suits if he does not finish his stipulated amount of work. Year after year went on so; sometimes he saw her, for a brief season, at Vienna or Geneva, or some place not so very far from Paris, where she happened to be. She never came to Paris, but her travels, either with or without her husband, always with her daughter and the daughter's governess, not infrequently brought her near enough for Balzac to meet without taking too long from his demanding work. M. de Hanski, so far from objecting to the friendship, seems to have favored it, and to have thought a great deal of the novelist; but, although neither Balzac nor Madame Hanska were in any way dishonorable to the old man, it is more than doubtful if he knew quite the extent of the affection that existed between them,—that is to say, the affection that existed between Balzac

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and the lady. If she had any for him beyond a kind of gratified vanity and piquant, intellectual interest, it is difficult to find it out. She was forever lecturing poor Balzac on the "levity of his character," and adjuring him to restore his soul through the offices of the Church. His pitiful restlessness seems to have meant nothing at all to her,—the restlessness of the overworked making no appeal to the sympathies of one restless through *ennui*; and the very ardor of his devotion to her was cause for her reproach, not because she saw aught that was dishonoring in it, but because she could feel nothing of the sort herself, and so mistrusted anyone who could.

He writes to her in 1839 :

"You wish me the tranquillity of soul that you enjoy. Alas! I have passions, or, to speak more correctly, passion, too living, too palpitating, to be able to extinguish my soul. . . . I never

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pride myself on what is called talent ; nor yet on my will which is held to be kindred with that of Napoleon. But I do render thanks and take pride in my heart, in the constancy of my affections. *There* is my wealth ; *there* are the treasures beyond the reach of the one who coined that gold ; the workman who made those ducats is far away, but the miser holds them ever in his hand."

And he goes on to tell her of a woman who once said to him, " You have a great and noble soul ; and I know where to touch you," and " a month never passes that I do not remember the look of the sky at the moment those words were said, and the color of the cloud I saw there." Poor, hungry heart ! He got little enough such cheer from his Russian countess divinity, who was always putting him to the necessity of defending himself against some charge, either of innate levity or of insufficient regularity in answering her letters. One can never understand such hearts ; one knows that they beat, on every hand, and that the

bigger and warmer and truer they are, the more capable they seem to be of spending themselves in devotion to the most faulty, the most unlovely, the most anæmic of creatures. They make plain to us that love is, after all, a subjective thing, almost entirely ; bearing, of necessity, no direct relation to the object loved, but only to the capability of the lover. Perhaps this is the way God takes to make it understandable how He should love us.

There may have been something lovable in Evelina Hanska, more than we can gather from our scant testimony. Perhaps she really loved him as much as she knew how, only the insufficiency of it is pitifully apparent, beside the glowing splendor of his plenitude. She might have been so much to him, the lonely, heart-hungry toiler, if she had but thrown herself, with all her idle energies and enthusiasms, into the struggle of his literary life. But, after all, she *was* a

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very great deal to that literary life, for, whether for what she was or for what he thought her, she was a spur to him. "Do you feel what there is under all this?" he wrote her, after an enumeration of some of his stupendous undertakings, "There is *you!* Your friend must be a giant, a truly great man."

In November, 1841, M. de Hanski died. On receipt of the intelligence, communicated by the widow, Balzac, her friend, wrote :

"As for me, dear, adored one, although this event makes me attain to that which I have ardently desired for nearly ten years, I can, before you and God, do myself this justice, that I have never had in my heart any other thing than complete submission, and that I have not, in my most cruel moments, stained my soul with evil wishes. No one can prevent certain involuntary transports. Often I have said to myself, 'How light my life would be with *her!*' No one can keep his faith, his heart, his inner being without hope. Those two motive powers, of which the Church makes virtues, have sustained me in my struggle."

After that, he had but one desire,—to get to her, to tell her his love, to hear that she loved him in return. But although she professed no grief, only a decent, respectful regret, for her husband's death, Madame Hanska was slow indeed to reward her faithful suitor. For one thing, the care of the vast estate was left to her in trust for her daughter, and it was a long labor to settle it. For a second hindrance, Russian law required her relinquishment of all property rights on marriage with a foreigner, and for a third, the Emperor's consent could only with great difficulty be obtained for such a marriage, and it was incompatible with Madame Hanska's dignity and her care for her daughter's future that she be married without sanction. However, even after the settlement of the estate and the ideally prosperous and happy marriage of her daughter, in 1846, Balzac's adored countess kept him waiting, waiting, always

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waiting. In the meanwhile, the horrible labors of years had begun to tell on Balzac; the dreadful malady of the heart which brought about his all-too-early end had become alarming, and he suffered pitifully. The tone of his letters changes, gradually, from that of the slaving Titan to that of the suffering man; he is laid low, he cannot work, he fears that the tale of his days is told and happiness has not drawn nigh. How a woman, so loved, could have refrained, even at the cost of her fortune, from going to him, to carry the poor being a belated tenderness, is more than one can conceive, reading the heart-breaking, albeit very dignified, letters, with overflowing eyes. In one of the saddest of those letters he wrote :

“Thanks be to you, O dear and tender consoling angel, who alone have poured into my desolate life some drops of pure happiness, that marvellous oil which does at times give courage and vigor to the fainting wrestler. That alone should

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open to you the gates of paradise, if indeed, you have any sins with which to reproach yourself—you, wife so perfect, mother so devoted, friend so kind and compassionate. It is a very great and noble mission to console those who have found no consolation upon earth. I have, in the treasure of your letters, in the still greater treasure of my recollections, in the grateful and constant thought of the good you have done to my soul by your counsel and your example, a sovereign remedy against all misfortunes ; and I bless you very often, my dear and beneficent star, in the silence of the night and in the worst of my troubles. May that blessing, which looks to God as the Author of all good, reach you often. Try to hear it sometimes in the murmuring sounds that whisper in the soul though we know not whence they come. My God ! without you, where should I be ! ”

In January, 1847, Madame Hanska came to Paris, where she resided in an apartment for a number of months, preceding him by a short time to her home in Russia, where he joined her in October of that year. Before this, however, he had builded, “ of straws,” he said, meaning to indicate the patient perseverance

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by which he had brought together trifles, a home, to which he hoped to bring his bride, so soon as she should give the word. His delight in this home, really a treasure house of beauty, was childishly simple and sincere, and not even his first real knowledge of the state from which he was wooing his countess, the splendors he asked her to forsake to come to his little nest in Paris, could temper his pride in that home that Love had builded. Whatever her reasons, Madame Hanska was not yet ready to make her poor lover happy, and back to Paris he went, very sad and very ill, in the spring of 1848. But he could not live away from her; the love and longing of years had been too much for him; the emptiness of his heart through so much of his life of shocking labors, was reacting, naturally. In the fall of 1848 he returned to Russia, where he lived, in greater or less physical anguish and the hope deferred that maketh the heart sick, until the

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spring of 1850. On March 14 of that year he was married, a poor, worn-out, trembling bridegroom, too ill to start on his homeward wedding journey until his honeymoon was six weeks old. In May they came home. Madame Balzac herself put the finishing touches to the nest for the coming of the bride, and when she had set blooming plants in the places precisely designated by her son in his letter of instructions, and had lighted the lamps and drawn the soft curtains, she stole away and left him to take possession of this fairy domain as she had left him, thirty-one years before, to take possession of the garret in Rue Lesdiguieres. The lad who had gone to his exile in a garret with buoyant tread, because he believed it led to fame, had come at last, with dragging feet, to his House of Dreams. He was free of debt, he was at the pinnacle of fame, he had builded for himself a home of exquisite beauty, and he was bringing to

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it the woman he had loved and longed for through nearly a score of arduous, heart-sick years.

A month after that home-coming his old friend, Theophile Gautier, called to see him, and was told that he was out. The following day came a note of regret, written by Madame Honoré de Balzac, and at the foot a trembling scrawl: "I can no longer read or write. De Balzac."

"I have kept," says Gautier, "that sorrowful line,—the last, probably, that the author of the *Comédie Humaine* ever wrote. It was, though I did not comprehend it at the time, the supreme cry of the thinker and worker: '*It is finished!*'"

On the night of August 18, Victor Hugo, having heard that Balzac was dying, went to see him. It was a dark night, the moon veiled by clouds, and in the room where Balzac lay only a faint light pierced the gloom and fell athwart the face of the dying Titan. As the daybreak struggled through the curtains, it marked the end; with the rose light

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of the summer dawn he was gone, and the soft, sweet, radiant morning, driving away the shadows of that ghostly death chamber, must be the nearest comprehension we can have of the sun of realization that rose, therewith, for Honoré de Balzac.

On the 21st they buried him. He was borne to his grave by Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Sainte-Beuve, and Monsieur Baroche, Minister of the Interior.

“It was one of those days,” said Hugo, “when the heavens seem to weep. . . . When we reached the grave, which was on the brow of the hill, the crowd was immense; . . . while I was speaking the sun went down. All Paris lay before me afar off in the splendid mists of the sinking light, the glow of which appeared to fall into the grave at my feet as the dull noise of the earth upon the coffin interrupted my last words:—

“ ‘No, it is not the Unknown to him. No, I have said it before, and I shall never weary of saying it,—no, it is not darkness to him, it is Light! It is not the end, but the beginning; not nothingness, but eternity! Is not this true, ye

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who listen to me? Such coffins proclaim immortality. In the presence of certain illustrious dead we feel the divine destiny of that intellect which has traversed earth to suffer and be purified. Do we not say to ourselves, here, to-day, that it is impossible that a great genius in this life can be other than a great spirit after death? " "

So there, on the brow of the hill, in the silent city, where he had sat so often as a dreaming boy, they laid him, Paris, bathed in sunset glories, at his feet. Fame had come to him, but her power had not sufficed to wipe away his "abundant tears." And love had come to him, but not as a balm for life's fret, only as a plummet to measure its capabilities, to sound the depths of yearning, that thereto might be fitted the heights of attainment, Otherwhere. And all these things, and many more, are comprehended in the single name, "Balzac," which catches the eye of the aspiring youth in Pere-Lachaise to-day, and sets the passer-by to dreaming.

THE MOST FAMOUS LOVE-STORY
OF ALL THE AGES,—DANTE AND
HIS BEATRICE

TO some extent, all men are buffets of Fortune. True, some yield themselves meekly to her buffetings and some, not able to escape the blows, stand up to them with stoutly clenched fists and, rendering back thrust for thrust, wax strong in the unchosen contest in which it even happens that peradventure some outwrestle fate whom fate has sought to throw. But to every one it happeneth that fight he must, and to few doth it fall to choose their fight. "I tread the stage," saith a well-conceived character in recent fiction, "as a fine gentleman. It is the part for which I was cast, and I play it well with proper mien and gait. I was not asked

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if I would like the part, . . . but seeing that I must play it, and that there is that within me which cries out against slovenliness, I play it as an artist should."

That is what, translating the somewhat cynical figure of the poor gentleman into the rather more spiritualized expressions of the poets, we are all doing, must all do,—playing without slovenliness, like Marmaduke Haward, the parts for which we were cast, or rallying our faltering courage with Henley's slogan :

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from Pole to Pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

* * * * *

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate ;
I am the captain of my soul."

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But life, which deals out to every man not according to his choosing, left not man without some choice. We learn by buffeting the inevitable ; we exercise our learning when we are given a choice. And if, in youth, the inevitable seems hard, after a little experience we come to thank God that He leaves us so little choosing. It is so much, much easier to endure than to stand forth alone and dare,—so much that men have always clung tenaciously to the idea of fate, and shrinking even from such free will as was possible, have sought to put off on chance's shoulders the issue of their own free deeds. They have called Love the little *blind* god, and pretended, in their weakness for irresponsibility, that there is naught but chance directing his keen arrows and only fate in their results. Ah, well ! Perhaps one may not choose whom he will love, but certainly he may choose how he will do it. Here fate leaves him free, providing him only

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with a touchstone to show what manner of man he may be in the secret treasure chambers of his own soul.

Fate once decreed that a Florentine youth should love a lady whom he could not win, but not fate decided that he should love her as never before was lady loved and that his love should make both him and her immortal.

So spiritualized did Dante's love of Beatrice become that certain critics, groping, stumbling, towards his heights, have grown dizzy and confused, and declared Beata Beatrix a symbol only ; of political ardor, saith some ; of religious ecstasy, say others. But not so wrote his contemporaries ; not so decree his best interpreters ; not so decide those readers of the great poet of heaven and hell who bring to his understanding a mind that falters not at deep abysses nor giddy grows in soaring flights. A flesh and blood woman was Beatrice Portinari, and a very flesh and blood

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man was Dante Alighieri, and not otherwise than by starting from this flesh and blood can one realize the full portent of their story. Back, then, to a merry May-day in old Florence, in the year 1274, when Folco Portinari, a rich Florentine, gave a feast to his neighbors,—the feast of the new spring,—and while their elders ate of Folco's rare viands and praised his fine vintages, the children of the feasting families played apart, happy after a fashion of their own, and little, serious-eyed, quiet-demeanored Dante Alighieri, smitten with a new shyness, stood aloof and watched Beatrice, the lovely little daughter of Folco, as she employed her pretty winsomeness in the rôle of hostess. She was not quite eight, he was not quite nine years old. He may have seen her before, but unnoticingly ; perhaps, in the superiority of his boy's estate, he had looked down on all girls, the little Beatrice among the number. But this May-day, in her dress "of a

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most noble color, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age," and wearing, too, the bewitching consciousness of femininity which even a wee woman wears for the guests under her own roof-tree, she woke the eternal masculine in young Dante who, writing of that day, long years afterwards, said, "From that time forward, Love quite governed my soul." Let him who at nine loved not some sunny-haired, sweet maid deny that such a thing could be.

It seems that Dante did not even have speech with Beatrice at that time, but the bearing of the little maid was so full of sweetness and gentle dignity that she woke in him hardly his masculinity so much as his idealism, and because it was she who woke it, came to typify to him the substance of things worshipful. "This youngest of the Angels," he called her, and said, "She seemed not to be the daughter of mortal man, but of God."

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Dante was afraid to write much of "the passions and doing of such early youth," for fear his "words might be counted something fabulous," so he passes all the delicious phases of child-love by with a delicate little insinuation that its details may be readily imagined by those to whom his statement of love's thrall over him is clear, and comes "to such [things] as are writ in his memory with a better distinctness."

The first of these chronicled by him happened exactly nine years after that May-day when the life of the little Florentine lad left the ordinary channels of day-to-day living and began to flow towards the illimitable ideal. He had been a busy youth those nine years. Those were stirring times in Italy, the cradle of modern culture. Literature was waking from the long night of the dark ages, the great era of painting and sculpture was on the way, with Cimabue, Giotto, and Niccolo Pisano making ready

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for the coming of that later host whose works hold Italy forever high above the earth in the cult of beauty. Young Dante, favored by fortune with a very comfortable patrimony and able to indulge his tastes without fear of the cost, pursued his studies in Florence, Padua, and Bologna, educating himself not only in philosophy and the sciences, but in literature, painting, and music, so that it was a youth of the most gentle culture who carried, all those years, the image of the exquisite Beatrice in his heart, cherishing the same right worshipfully albeit he had never, even yet, exchanged so much as a word of greeting with his lady. Strangely enough,—miraculously strange, Dante thought,—it was another May-day in Florence when the little lassie of the scarlet gown appeared again to her adorer, “dressed all in pure white,” this time, and walking between “two gentle ladies elder than she.” And passing her young neighbor

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in the street, saluted him "with so virtuous a bearing that I seemed then and there to behold the very limits of blessedness . . . and because it was the first time that any words from her reached mine ears, I came into such sweetness that I parted thence as one intoxicated." After this meeting Dante had a wonderful, symbolic dream, which so deeply impressed him that it moved him to write his first sonnet, addressed

"To every heart which the sweet pain doth move,"

and entreating an exposition of the riddle of his dream. Many returned him answers thereto, but none rightly; although the poem served the purpose of introducing him to many youths and older men of kindred tastes, among them he whom Dante soon came to call the first among his friends.

Up to this time Dante had succeeded in cherishing his love entirely in secret.

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Now, however, preyed upon by the unreadable but unmistakably tragic portent of his vision or dream, he fell a prey to such uneasiness, because of his love, that he could no longer conceal from his friends that he was in desperate straits for love of some one. His countenance so betrayed him, he says, that there was no longer any use trying to conceal the fact. "But when they went on to ask, 'And by whose help hath love done this?' I looked in their faces smiling, and spake no word in return." But not in this day is the curiosity of acquaintances to be put off so easily, with a smiling silence, and not in Dante's day was human nature of so very different a pattern. The mystery wherewith he surrounded the love that dominated, now, all his thoughts and led him into such prolonged periods of pensive brooding that his very health was impaired and his looks "fell off," only whetted the keenness of his friends to know who

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she might be who so inspired him to sighs and long-drawn silences. In turn, their keenness, too, only made him the more resolved that they should not find out, that none should toss the sacred name of Beatrice in jest while alluding to her worshipper's distraught estate. Then stooped Dante to what one can scarcely in anywise condone as an honorable action, and singling out a certain lady in Florence paid her such apparent deference that people began to whisper among themselves it was she whom he loved, and he, hearing them and rejoicing that his secret was yet safe, began to think how he might "make use of this lady as a screen to the truth ; and so well did I play my part that most of those who had hitherto watched and wondered at me, now imagined they had found me out. By her means I kept my secret concealed till some years were gone over."

Just why Dante should have been so

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strenuous to keep his secret concealed is the mystery. It does not seem that he was so much, if indeed he was at all, Beatrice's inferior as to make marriage out of the question. Boccaccio ventures the opinion that Dante might have had Beatrice for the asking, but was too indescribably shy to entertain the hope in his heart even, let alone make it a plea to Beatrice. Not knowing, some have credited him with being an astute dreamer, having always the heart, which is, he says, Desire, in subordination to the Soul, which is Reason by his reckoning. That is to say, some have thought him philosopher enough determinedly to keep the ideal set apart from the realities of life, conscious that the two could not become one. Others have preferred to believe that his great love made him feel a great unworthiness, as, in all times past, the best of men have felt when they paused to contemplate their desires to wear a white virgin soul upon their

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bosoms, to lay on some sunshine-kissed head the heavy, heavy crown of wifehood and maternity.

All that Dante has written of his love goes to show that the latter and not the former of these conjectures is the probable truth. We shall see, presently, to what end this was true of him, but why, foreseeing that end no more than he did, he went forward thereuntoward so unerringly, one may explain as shrewdness or shyness, or as providential ruling, according as one pleases. And according as one believes that he was consciously indulging himself in a very shrewd bit of idealizing (what a paradox that sounds!) or playing unconsciously into the hand of fate, his great Fate, must one interpret what next befell him in the course of his true love for his lady. That lady whom first he took for his screen seems not to have resented her position, if indeed she ever realized it; but necessity of some sort having com-

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pelled her to reside in another and distant city, Dante was fain to find another in her place. This thing, he says, Love, in a vision, commanded him to do, naming the lady who should be his first screen's successor. In this matter he obeyed Love, but whether Love could have been misguided (which Love has been known to be!) or whether Dante did not rightly interpret and wisely execute the commands of Love (which, also, has been known to be!) the lady elected to be screen number two did not take kindly to the situation, and complained rather loudly, one may infer, that Dante's attentions were obnoxious to her; so much so that Beatrice, hearing her righteous complaint, took umbrage at Dante, in the cause of her friend and of womanhood, and denied him thenceforth her salutation. This was a most piteous great blow to Dante, who explains, with his delicious naïvete, what her good-will, as expressed in her salutation, meant to

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him, bringing him such happiness "that there was no man mine enemy any longer," and such "warmth of charity that most certainly in that moment I would have pardoned whosoever had done me an injury." No wonder lovers for six centuries have found fellowship in Dante, for when did not young lover question the Providence that deprived him, or let him stand deprived, of his lady's smile, since when he had it he was tenderly disposed to all the world, and when he had it not it was so hard to be good? Dante, under a cloud with his lady, did what young lovers have ever done when so unwrought, and retired "to a lonely place to bathe the ground with most bitter tears; and when, by this heat of weeping, I was somewhat relieved, I betook myself to my chamber, where I could lament unheard. And there, having prayed to the lady of all Mercies, and having said also, 'O Love, aid thou thy servant,' I went

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suddenly asleep like a beaten, sobbing child." Then, in a vision, came Love to him and made clear unto him why the gentle Beatrice was wroth with him, and commanded him, when he should arise, to write and send unto her a poem which should explain why he had offended, for none other reason than for very love of herself, these many years ago. This Dante did, addressing his first poem to Beatrice, although all he had ever written had been inspired by her and were full of allusions, which only he could understand, to the mighty love he bore her. He began his poem in this wise :

"Song, 'tis my will that thou do seek out Love,
And go with him where my dear lady is."

And after charging how she shall be addressed, he entreats :

"Say to her also : 'Lady, his poor heart
Is so confirmed in faith
That all its thoughts are but of serving
thee ;

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'Twas early thine, and could not swerve apart.'

Then, if she wavereth,

Bid her ask Love, who knows if these
things be.

And in the end, beg of her modestly

To pardon so much boldness ; saying too :—

'If thou declare his death to be thy due,

The thing shall come to pass as doth behove.' "

Beatrice seems to have treated this touching appeal for pardon with silent contempt ; and then sat Dante down, on many a day, and held most serious communion with himself, after an old, old fashion of the love-lorn, asking himself whether it could be right and wholesome for a man to let himself get into such a state for love, so that one woman's attitude of mind towards him had power to make or to undo him. Life was young in his veins, the world was full of fair women to love, of brave deeds to be done, of uses to make of one's culture, beyond much weeping over the coldness of one and the inditing of appeals to

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her pity. One thinks the world was not beyond its earliest infancy when men and maids began, in the hour of love's first disappointment, to console themselves with some variation of the old saw that there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. Not even Dante escaped this common experience of all lovers, and he tells us how he set over, in his bitter-sweet reasoning, one argument against another, to this end: although it might be said, with almost equal truth, that love is good, since it "diverts the mind from all mean things," and that it is evil, since the more homage its servants pay to it the more painful are their torments, in his case the good must needs outweigh the evil for that his lady whom he worshipped was so good that love of her could not but react beneficially on her adorer, whether his devotion moved her to compassion or not. A very little later Dante said to a friend concerning his love,

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“Of a surety I have now set my feet on that point of life beyond the which he must not pass who would return,” but it is the most tremendously significant thing in Dante’s love, so far, that before he set his foot on that point of life he waged a valiant battle with his conscience, questioning himself whither he might expect himself to be led if he abandoned himself to a power fast out-reaching his resistance. Here Dante laid his first claim to be reckoned the world’s greatest lover, for the capacity to fall headlong in love belongs in common to all youth, but the capacity to sit down and honestly face the questionings of one’s own soul as to the uplifting results of that love, and, unconvinced of them, to abandon it, no matter what the allurements to remain, or, convinced of them, to be true to it, no matter what the pain entailed,—that is not the common quality of youth, but the extreme test of a great soul! A good deal of life,

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as has been said, is governed by fate,—the choices made by others bind us, or the overrulings of Providence send us along ways whose endings we do not ken,—but *more* than “once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,” and perched at every point of decision comes an opportunity to compromise. “All or nothing” may be the hero’s slogan, or it may be the fool’s; not often may it be a wise man’s, for while fortune seems sometimes to favor the bold, it is oftener the children she loves most whom she makes to sit down and weigh blessing against blessing, offset against offset, and make solemn compromise of some dear desire for something better worth while.

No more than any of us can see ahead could Dante see whereunto his way led when he elected to love Beatrice to the end, notwithstanding her coldness, but he felt that, however she might misunderstand him, his lady whom

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he loved was a pure and noble lady, contemplation of whose loveliness of soul and body made him, notwithstanding the woe it cost him, a better man, with kindlier judgments and wider tolerance and quicker sympathy and holier desires,—therefore he clave unto his lady, trusting that, since he loved purely, no real ill could befall him, nor could love of his work harm to his dear lady.

Soon after coming to his decision, Dante found himself one day in the company of Beatrice at a wedding; his confusion and suffering were so great, and so unconcealable, that some critics have thought it must have been Beatrice's own wedding, which occurred about this time and of which Dante makes no mention whatever in his narrative. This may or may not have been the case, but whatever the special nature of the occasion it seems to have been one of most poignant suffering to Dante, whose misery sat so palpably upon him as to

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make him an object of ridicule, for Beatrice among the rest. His bitter pain at her behavior is easily understandable, but not so easy to comprehend is Beatrice's action,—save as one knows, without comprehending why, that in all times the gentlest of women have been miserably cruel in love, the quality and extent of a woman's single-souled and absolute devotion to the man of her heart's choice being matchable only by the quality and extent of her contempt for the devotion of that unlucky wight who loves her. Femininity is compounded of contradictory excesses calculated to keep the blunt wits of mankind either mightily sharpened or altogether out of the fray, and there is only this much to be said for Beatrice,—she was a woman ; a very sweet, gentle, womanly woman, full of humility, notwithstanding her beauty and many graces, very nearly, if not altogether, such an Angel as Dante conceived her

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to be ; but being a woman she carried the dual capacity which marks the daughters of Eve, of divinest, unseeking, all-sacrificing love, and most incredible cruelty ; not the cruelty needlessly to crush a worm, perhaps ; not the lack of pity which could withhold tender tears over the death of a pet kitten ; but the illimitable heartlessness of a woman towards suffering not physical, borne by some one outside the pale of her sympathies.

Stung by her mockery, Dante wrote a most appealing sonnet in the hope "that peradventure it might come unto her hearing," and then sat him down once more to argument with his heart, saying, "Seeing that thou comest into such scorn by the companionship of this lady, wherefore seekest thou to behold her?" And his heart made answer unto him that the anguish he "had endured thereby" was not sufficient to restrain his desire to be near her. The bitter

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complexity of the human heart was becoming, page by page, an open book to Dante ; he had been grievously misunderstood, but had been able to love, notwithstanding, holding his lady blameless and electing to love her though she loved him not ; then was offered him another trial in his lady's open scorn, the which he could not condone, for very reason's sake, but the which he found he could neither make her condemnation in his eyes. Love comes, ever, to that day. First, it saith to the hurt heart, "She does not know ; love on, she does not mean this hurt,—'tis simply that she does not understand." Then, on a day, Love may no longer make this excuse ; she does know ; there can be no more blinking to the truth ; the Angel stands proven of guile, a daughter of Eve, after all ; and what says Love ? "No Angel, but a very daughter of Eve, have I desired from the first, that to the pleasure of worshipping

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her graces I might add the sweet joy of forgiving her her faults." Thus it became clear to Dante himself why he should love Beatrice even though she scorned him, and made mockery of his love for her ; but to others, as ever happeneth, the reason was not so apparent, and certain ladies of Dante's acquaintance questioning him thereupon, not idly, but because they said "Certainly the end of such a love must be worthy of knowledge," he replied unto them : "Ladies, the end and aim of my Love was but the salutation of that lady ; wherein alone I found that beatitude which is the goal of desire. And now that it hath pleased her to deny me this, Love, my Master, of his great goodness, hath placed all my beatitude there where my hope will not fail me." And when they besought him where was that beatitude, he answered them : "In those words that do praise my lady." To the which one of his questioners rejoined, "If thy

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speech were true, those words that thou didst write concerning thy condition would have been written with another intent." Then was Dante, according to his own frank avowal, put to shame, for in his heart he knew that the words he had spoken of late in praise of his lady had been in the hope of exciting her to pity of him, rather than for the single purpose of making her better loved of all men, and he went out from the presence of those gentle questioners resolved "that thenceforward I would choose for the theme of my writings only the praise of this most gracious being." In that hour, one may say, the impulse that later blossomed and bore fruit in the *Divina Commedia*, took root in Dante's heart; that is to say, in the hour when he humbly resolved to think of himself no more, but only of her, he turned his face in the direction of immortality. The exquisite sonnets of the *Vita Nuova* which immediately followed upon this

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resolution, one longs to quote without the loss of a single line ; but why ? Since they are, according to Dante's own injunction to his forth-faring song, known of all lovers, not "the defiled and common sort," but all "where man and woman dwell in courtesy," and interweave their loving with the love garlands of exquisite souls long since become choral in the Choir Invisible.

The peace that passeth understanding, the peace of self-surrender, came to Dante after he had come up out of "the valley of decision" to the mount of vision and of transfigured desire, but thence he was called, again, "not many days after," ("it being the will of the Most High God, who also from Himself put not away death") to walk in the Valley of the Shadow wherein his dear lady walked by reason of her father going out of this life and passing, as Dante saith, "certainly into glory." The grief of Beatrice was very piteous, and

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the anguish of Dante, beholding her suffering, brought him to yet another trial of his love, which is to learn how vicarious a thing is Love, how constituted to bear in itself every pang of a loved one's suffering, ay, and others with them, barbed with the torturing sense of Love's impotence to alleviate. Either from this cause or from another Dante fell very ill, suffering so great anguish of body that he was completely prostrate thereby, and while he lay so, he says, "being overcome with intolerable pain, a thought came into my mind concerning my lady . . . and weeping I said within myself: 'Certainly it must some time come to pass that the very gentle Beatrice will die.' Then, feeling bewildered, I closed mine eyes; and my brain began to be in travail as the brain of one frantic;" and in that hour Dante saw a vision of a sad hour, when "the sun went out, so that the stars showed themselves, and they were of such a color



DANTE'S DREAM

From the painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

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that I knew they must be weeping ; and it seemed to me that the birds fell dead out of the sky, and that there were great earthquakes." Then, while he wondered thereat, in his dream, one came unto him, and said : "Hast thou not heard? She that was thine excellent lady hath been taken out of life." Then saw he, in his vision, a multitude of angels bearing the soul of Beatrice to glory, "and it seemed to me that I went to look upon the body wherein that blessed and most noble spirit had had its abiding-place." Dante Gabriel Rossetti has given us a wonderful painting of this part of Dante's dream, wherein the body of Beatrice lay at rest, certain ladies seeming to be covering her head with a white veil and shutting from view that humble aspect her face wore, "as though she had said, 'I have attained to look on the beginning of peace.' And therewithal," says Dante, "I came unto such humility by the sight of her, that I

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cried out upon Death, saying: 'Now come unto me, and be not bitter against me any longer; surely, there where thou hast been, thou hast learned gentleness. Wherefore come now unto me who do greatly desire thee; seest thou not that I wear thy color already?' From the bitter agony of this dream Dante was awakened by a compassionate watcher who, alarmed by his groans and tears, entreated him, "Sleep no longer, and be not disquieted." Then he knew that it was but a vision he had had, but so vivid a vision of what might befall that the remembrance sat heavy upon him for many days. If it weighed on him as a portent, he does not say so, but goes on to say how exquisite in spirit his lady had become since her sorrow, so that "when she passed anywhere folk ran to behold her; which thing was a deep joy to me; and when she drew near unto any, so much truth and simpleness entered into his heart that he dared

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neither to lift his eyes nor to return her salutation ; and unto this many who have felt it can bear witness. She went along crowned and clothed with humility, showing no whit of pride in all that she heard and saw ; and when she had gone by, it was said of many, ‘ This is not a woman, but one of the beautiful angels of Heaven : ’ and there were some that said : ‘ Surely this is a miracle ; blessed be the Lord, who hath power to work thus marvellously. ’ ” The joy, the deep, holy joy this sweetness of the chastened Beatrice must have been to Dante can be comprehended only by those who, having made sacrifice of desire after the flesh, come into realization after the spirit. The ideal which she typified for him had led him, now, through nearly all the phases through which heart of man may pass ere it put off the flesh. He had loved her first blindly, with unquestioning admiration ; then reverently, with the earnestness of a newly-awakened

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soul anxious to entertain no passion not ennobling ; then tenderly, with a divine gladness to forgive her faults ; then yearningly, with a great longing to carry her sorrows, to make his love a cloak to throw before her delicate feet in a miry way, a breath, to carry the perfume of her sweetness far and wide. He had abandoned all desire save only the desire to serve and praise her ; now it seemed that he was to be rewarded ; that for his love, raised from the desire of the heart to the worship of the soul, he was to be paid not according to the lower order, which he had left behind, but according to the higher order whereunto he had achieved. The blossoming of Beatrice, after her heavy rain of tears, into a woman of wonderful soul, must have made her seem more her lover's own, viewed from his mount of transfigured desire, than ever she could by any possibility have been had her heart blessed him merely but sent



BEATA BEATRIX

From the painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

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not her soul to be his guide through Paradise.

Dante was engaged in writing a poem descriptive of the change wrought in his emotions by the changes in himself and the changes in his lady, "when the Lord God of justice called my most gracious lady unto Himself," leaving, as he says, "The whole city widowed and despoiled of all its dignity." Dante was five-and-twenty when this great grief befell him; he lived to be fifty-six, and thirty-one years after the death of Beatrice a wearied old exile, man of many sorrows,—having put the finishing touch to his *Paradiso*, concluding the great *Commedia*, which was his love's memorial, with a vision of Beatrice, high in the highest heaven, praying for him,—rendered up his spirit to his Creator, and "there can be no doubt," says Boccaccio, his friend and biographer, "but that he was received into the arms of his most noble Beatrice, with whom in the presence of

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Him who is the supreme God, having laid aside the miseries of this present life, he now joyfully lives in that felicity which awaits no end."

Never man lived, save only the Man of Sorrow Himself, whom more grievous sorrows did afflict than afflicted Dante ; "unhappy in the services he desired to render his country, misunderstood by his fellow-citizens, condemned to the stake, his writings lost, persecuted on account of them, his studies interrupted, an exile, a wanderer, in poverty, perhaps a beggar, a solitary man, the scorn of buffoons, the sport of princes ;" thus one characterized him ; a buffet of fortune indeed, cast for a tragic part, nor asked if he would like it ; but like least and greatest of us, he had his moments of choice, and of the results of these it is said of him, "Dante never stooped to meanness, he never deviated from his faith, he never ceased to the end to love, to labor, and to write, for his mistress,

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his country, and his God." And his tribulation has become the glory of all them that love, his ascent the carven steps by which, forevermore, Love may climb into the very presence of the Most High.

WHEN LOVE CAME TO MICHAEL
ANGELO

A LITTLE, beauty-loving boy, playing in the streets of Urbino, must have had many a thrill of delight in the golden spring days of 1489, for then came Fabrizio Colonna, head of the greatest princely house in all Italy, to wed the young daughter of the Duke d'Urbino. Pageant succeeded pageant in honor of the event, until at last the bridegroom with his glittering retinue bore away the sweet young bride, with her rich dower-chests and her train of personal attendants, to one of his many, many castles near Rome, and Urbino settled into quiet again and the reaction that follows on festivity. The great castle of the duke began to look once more like the stronghold of a warrior,

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and the minds of his feudal subjects turned again to thoughts of arms. Only a little boy, called Raphael, stood and strained his eyes in the direction where the last glint of sun on steel and gold had marked the disappearance of the glittering cavalcade towards the Eternal City.

Arrived at his castle of Marino, crowning a hill-crest about twelve miles from Rome, Fabrizio Colonna and his bride prepared to pass there, in sweet peace and seclusion, so long a honeymoon as the shifting fortunes of war might allow the young husband, already on the high road to that eminence in military command which he soon attained. And there, in 1490, while the honeymoon was not yet waned, came a tiny daughter to the great house of Colonna, a beautiful baby born to a wonderful inheritance of love and dignity and all the graces of person, mind, and heart. This little Vittoria, coming of a race of great

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princes who were also great soldiers, and great ladies who were also great women, was nurtured from her cradle in a pride the greatest the world has ever known, the pride of race and power which culminates in the spirit of *noblesse oblige*.

When Vittoria was a wee little lady of four, holding her own tiny court of beauty and love in the castle where she was born, one of the ever-recurring crises in the troubled affairs of poor Italy called Fabrizio Colonna from patriarchal scenes of peace in his own great halls to camp and battle at the head of his army. In those days poor Italy was but a bone of contention for hungry neighbors, and her dukes and princes took what side, now this, now that, best suited their own purposes. As between France and Spain, in 1494, Fabrizio Colonna took sides with Spain, placing himself under the command of the king of Naples, which then belonged

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to Spain. This king, Ferdinand, delighted with his powerful new adherent, made him grand constable of Naples, and to further cement the alliance, proposed a marriage between Vittoria Colonna and Francesco d'Avalos, son of that most powerful Neapolitan noble, Alphonso, Marchese di Pescara. The little boy was six, the little girl was five, when the fortunes of war joined their destinies and the custom of the times sent the little Colonna maiden to the family of her betrothed to be educated.

The father of Francesco having been murdered by one of his slaves shortly before the consummation of the betrothal plans, the position of head of the house devolved on Costanza, elder sister of Francesco, and Duchessa di Francavilla. Their home was on the island of Ischia, twenty miles from Naples and regarded, strategically, as the key to that important city. Here, in a magnificent palace, Costanza the

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wise and good held her court, receiving great dignitaries of state and art, and disseminating love of culture and reverence of valor to the utmost of her power. She was a great chatelaine, this wise and good Costanza, whom poets and princes delighted to honor, and to her exquisite guardianship the two children committed to her care owed much of what made them, in future years, celebrated, not for their gifts alone, but for their graces ; not for their power to command only, but for their power to BE.

On the beautiful island, looking from its rock-ribbed heights far seaward and from its low-lying shores inward towards the opalescent Naples bay, the two betrothed children passed an idyllic youth. Deeply devoted to one another, holding nearly every interest in common, now running wild and free on the shore or in the woods of their beautiful island, now coming, like the little knight and

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lady they were, into their gracious duchessa's court to do their dignified duty by her great guests, they grew to man's and woman's estate, favored by every gentle Providence and blessed by an unbounded love. As they shot up into tall, lithe youth, he of sturdy, sinewy grace, she of slender, willowy beauty, one can imagine them in the great halls at Ischia, listening now to a mighty man of valor fresh from the king's service, whose stories of brave knights made Francesco, looking across at Vittoria, resolve to be such for her sake; and now to a celebrated troubadour, whose recital of fair ladies' love and loyalty made Vittoria, looking up at Francesco, take tender oath within her maiden breast to be to him the lovingest lady brave knight ever had.

When Vittoria was sixteen, or thereabouts, she returned to her father's house, where, although her betrothal to Francesco was well understood, many

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great nobles and princes offered themselves for her hand, the fame of her beauty and brilliance having travelled far. But Vittoria would hear none who came to woo. As she herself expressed it, years later, in one of her exquisite sonnets :

“Hardly had my spirit entered into life when my heart proscribed every other object! And nothing found favor in my eyes but the heavenly aspect of him in whose light I was always nourished.”

In 1509, therefore, when the bridegroom was twenty and his bride nineteen, Vittoria set out from her father's house for Ischia, in great state, attended by a grand escort of Roman nobility and a small army of servants of high and low degree bearing the more than princely dower portion and gifts of Vittoria to the ducal palace of D'Avalos, where, with all the pomp and splendor that only great nobles of those mediæval times could devise, these two fond, true



VITTORIA COLONNA

From the painting by Jules Lefèvre

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young hearts were united in marriage, than which, it is safe to say, no marriage ever was a more perfect union.

At first the young couple lent themselves to a very gay and splendid existence, taking up graciously the social duties demanded of their exalted station, and only occasionally slipping away from the magnificence and pageantries at Naples to a quiet country-seat or home to their beloved Ischia, where, however, their life was anything but quiet, for the palace was ever the gathering place of distinguished companies, calling for distinguished hospitality.

So passed three golden years, without a shadow, much less a cloud, save only that no baby came as the supreme gift of God to those lovers, to stay with Vittoria and comfort her when finally, in 1512, Francesco, Marchese di Pescara, her husband, was called upon to serve the king of Naples in another war against France. What a knell this

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sounded in the heart of the lovely Vittoria only other women who have given up their beloved for their country can know. But she uttered no syllable of complaint, for she had learned early and well, this regal young princess with the dazzling, sun-crowned head and the heart of pure, pure gold, that whoso loveth his life—or his beloved's—shall lose it; for not by hoarding but by risking do great gains come.

So to the wars Pescara went, on his shield this motto: “*With this or on this,*” and “there is no doubt,” saith one of his chroniclers, “that he was a brave man, a great soldier, and a chivalrous gentleman.” And Vittoria kissed him bravely and watched him ride away. *God* knows what this has cost women since time began! Enough, if sorrow of ours could expiate sin, to wipe out all the sins of womankind from the First Mother down. And that day the gate of earthly paradise closed on Vittoria

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d'Avalos ; an idyllic youth, a halcyon maidenhood were passed ; womanhood was come, and sorrow. Love had brought her its ecstasy, henceforth she must pay the price therefor, which is exceeding great pain, for much treasure causeth much apprehension, and no more uneasy lieth the head of the Lord's anointed crowned with the kingdom's crown than that head of the Lord's anointed crowned with the crown of Love.

Vittoria, however, when called upon to lend her treasure at Fortune's risk, turned neither hard nor craven, but was stood in good stead by the princely blood of the Colonna, by the teachings of the wise and good Costanza, by the hero-tales of brave men of war and the love-songs of the great troubadours ; the pride of race was strong in her, and the pride of sex, and the pride of love. She had high honor in her keeping,—her husband's honor and that of his cause, brave womankind's honor, and

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the honor of Love. Therefore, although her heart was sore for her boy-husband, she set herself to noble tasks in study, to great exertions in social graciousness, nor faltered thereat when word came that Pescara, wounded in many places at the battle of Ravenna and left for dead on the battle-field, had been taken prisoner, together with her father, the grand constable. To Pescara, in a fortress prison at Milan, Vittoria addressed a wonderful lament in a poem of thirty-seven stanzas, in which she tells him of the strong presentiment she had of his danger before ever the messenger arrived with the news of it; whereunto Pescara replied, from his durance, in a long "Dialogue of Love," fervent with affection for her and grief in their separation.

He was soon released, on payment of a large ransom, and at once hastened to his beloved Vittoria, but was e'er long again called from her side, nor ever thereafter was left long in the en-

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joyment of a quiet life on lovely Ischia, the camp becoming his home and his absences therefrom in the nature of furloughs.

On the throne of France was young Francis I., a reckless fighter and a wily manipulator of statecraft; on the throne of England was young Henry VIII., advised by the scheming, unscrupulous Wolsey; on the thrones of Germany and Spain, with other important dominions in Europe and incalculable rich provinces in the New World, was young Charles V., mightiest monarch of modern times, with a territory not so great but that he was willing to do almost anything to extend it. There was little likely to be much peace, with the major part of Christendom under the rule of these three most hot-headed youths who ever sat on mighty thrones. And Pescara had the good, or evil, fortune to be a favorite with the imperial Charles, who kept him by his side whenever possible

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not only in war but in long journeys of state.

Vittoria, left so much to herself, relaxed not at all in her rigorous classic studies nor in the chaste outpourings of her heart in elegant Italian verse. In 1515, the maternal yearning strong within her, she proposed to her husband to take his young cousin, the Marchese del Vasto, to educate and make their heir. The boy was wild and rude, a veritable young savage for lack of proper training, and the heart of Vittoria inclined towards him with great tenderness, whereunto the little lad responded nobly. Thereafter Vittoria had him to direct and exhort and inspire, and to love, as well as her own labors of learning to pursue, and many a social dignity to uphold, many a stately beneficence to foster.

So the years went on, marked now by horrible war, now by fête or journey of greatest magnificence, when emperors,

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popes, kings, princes, were part of Vittoria's world, and her dazzling, pure beauty was the talk of her day, her loveliness and her learning alike the theme of enraptured chroniclers. Beautiful women were not rare in those days, when the most extravagant monarchs of modern times vied with one another no less in the splendor and gayety of their courts than in the strength of their armies and the strategy of their generals. But beautiful women who were good also, and learned, were not many, although a great revival of learning was in progress, among the noble women of Italy in particular. The fame of Vittoria, however, shone bright and lovely beyond that of any woman of her day, and men of learning, in all kinds and degrees of power, sought her society, even as celebrants of royal feasts and pageants sought the honor of her distinguished presence, for her beauty and her great ladyship. But ever the heart

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of Vittoria remained bound in passionate devotion to Pescara, the comrade of her childish play, the sharer of her girlish dreams, the fair, brave knight of her young womanhood.

In 1520 Vittoria's father died, and the year following she was called upon to give up her young adopted son to the army. This latter parting Pescara would fain have spared her yet awhile, but she would not have it so, not even although Del Vasto was the last of the D'Avalos, for she pleaded with her husband that it were better the family should become extinct than that it should be preserved at craven cost. So Vittoria sent her boy to war with her husband, presenting him with a superb tent for field use, and a little cabinet for his few luxuries, bearing the motto: "He is never less idle than when idle,"—her exhortation to beware the temptations of leisure in a camp.

The following year Vittoria's mother, the gentle Agnese, died, and in 1525

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Pescara fell at Pavia. Vittoria had not seen him since he came home to her for a flying three-days' visit when her mother died, and absence from him, at all times hard, must have been excruciating agony in the months preceding Pavia, when a league of Italian nobles in revolt against Charles V, were trying to seduce Pescara from allegiance by offering him the Neapolitan throne for himself if success crowned their efforts. Whatever temptation this offer might have had in it for Pescara, Vittoria, to whom he confided it, had no mind to be a queen at any such cost, and owing to her strenuous opposition Pescara declined to join the league and went once more into battle under Charles's banners,—for the last time. In the battle of Pavia he was wounded three times. Lying ill of his wounds and of fever, he despatched a message for Vittoria, who hastened to him on the wings of anxiety, but was met in the way by another

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messenger bearing tidings of Pescara's death, at only thirty-six years of age, in the prime of his youth and glory.

Vittoria's grief was so supreme that she declared she could not live after him, and it was feared she might take her life ; but not even supreme grief can contradict the habits of a lifetime. Vittoria had been trained to a princely endurance.

At her brother's solicitation she repaired to the castle at Marino where her early childhood had been spent, and there, by the still waters of the little lake embosomed in the crater of an extinct volcano,—lake and mountains 'round about the theater of the *Æneid*, and loved by poets ever since,—she poured out her heart in impassioned poetry which, after the first bitterness of loss wore off, took on a note of profound piety, ever thereafter the dominant quality of Vittoria's verse. After a time she left Marino and returned to Ischia, more dear to her than any other spot on earth, because of its

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association with her beloved dead. There she lived in the greatest seclusion, employing herself with the writing of those sonnets of lamentation which raised to the memory of Pescara, as well as builded for herself, an enduring monument of fame.

For seven years Vittoria mourned as in sackcloth and ashes; then, emerging a little from her conventual seclusion, she devoted herself actively to the society of those persons most earnestly interested in the higher life, becoming especially a great friend, adviser, and encourager of many of the most eminent divines of that day when the beginning of the Reformation, sweeping over Europe, was waking it from its mediæval lethargy to a general renascence, spiritual, artistic, and political.

In 1538 Vittoria was in the zenith of her fame and the early, autumnal splendor of her beauty. She was forty-eight, but the wonderful, gold-crowned head,

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with its majestic pose, was unstreaked with silver, the great blue eyes were only the more beautiful when life's afternoon had begun to throw its long, lovely shadows into them than when they sparkled, undimmed, in youth's noon-day, and all the exceeding dignity of great love and the repose of spiritual conquest was 'round about her like a mantle more splendid than any of brocade, 'broidered with jewels, in which in her gay young wifehood she had graced the fêtes of emperors. "All looks are turned upon her," wrote one of her contemporaries, "She is full of a sweet and amiable expression; and she leads all men to desire her good opinion by emulating each other in high and elegant works."

In that year Vittoria came to Rome, escorted by her adopted son, Del Vasto. And in that year there was at work, in Rome, on the fresco in the Sistine Chapel, a sad old man of sixty-four



VITTORIA COLONNA
From the medal in her honor



MICHAEL ANGELO

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years, the greatest man in all Italy, but the loneliest,—for if ever genius isolated a man from his kind, in terrible grandeur, that man was Michael Angelo, whose supreme eminence in a multiplicity of gifts it makes one dizzy to contemplate, even from afar off. Just previous to that year, 1538, the year Providence had singled out for Michael Angelo's great blessing, he had buried his dear old father, aged ninety-two, and nearly at the same time his brother, who died of the plague in his arms. These deaths, that of his father in particular, left the mighty Angelo pathetically bereft; the storm of sorrow which shook him in this affliction he has voiced in his poems, calling himself "alone before heaven," and wailing, plaintively, "I have no friends; I need none; I wish for none." At this juncture in his life heaven sent him such a friend as not only befitted mighty Angelo, whom all the great of earth strove to claim friendship with,

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but such a friend as brought a tender glory to even his splendid supremacy.

All Rome, at this time, was intensely interested in "The Last Judgment," which he was executing for the Sistine Chapel. Every one, from the Pope himself to the commonest of the art-worshipping Romans, came to view his progress, and to wonder, and there, one day, as he labored, his heart sore with loneliness and unsatisfied loving, he turned from his gigantic work and beheld Vittoria Colonna, come to worship where he pointed sublimity,—like all the rest of the world. One longs with a great longing for a picture of that scene,—the gaunt, grizzled artist, exalted as probably no other man has been in his own time, but not warmed or fed thereby; the grim, gray man, with the awful majesty of soul and brain and the pitiful hunger of heart, into whose life no ray of unfiltered brightness such as daily blesses common men had ever

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come ; and the golden-haired and golden-hearted Vittoria, who had come out of great tribulation into great peace ; the woman whom nigh on fifty years of pure living, on, always, the loftiest plane accessible, had prepared, as 'twere, for this hour, bringing her, in all her ripe beauty of soul and body, all her warmth and glow of fervent living, to light the remaining years of this man's life with a light which fadeth not, but is from everlasting to everlasting.

Predestined to greatness, and allowed, at a very early age, to make his calling and election sure (he was only fifteen when the great Lorenzo de' Medici, the "Magnificent," took him into his own palace and almost into his own family circle, to foster, and benefit by, his marvellous gifts), Angelo had been all his life an incredibly hard worker ; driven by the terrific impetus of his manifold genius, he had toiled and toiled, day and night, youth slipping by while he

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labored, then manhood's prime, and age came creeping on before ever life became sweet to Michael Angelo, before ever he had turned from toiling at his Titans to find the very glory of God in a woman's eyes. Only *think* of the lonely giant! Had he not been the world's greatest sculptor, he would still have been pre-eminent in all times as one of its supremely great painters; and, apart from either of these things, he is the most sublime architect of modern times at least, and a poet so great, so deep-delving in his vision, so mighty in his spiritual conceptions, so grand in his use of language that even Wordsworth confessed himself unable to grasp his sonnets sufficiently to render them in English rhyme. The force of any one of these powers would have been sufficient to drive the possessor remorselessly along the steep and thorny way of the greatly gifted, but the fourfold supremacy was too much

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for any one man ; it crowded his life too full of awful majesty, and left it far too empty of blessed commonplaceness and healthful reaction ; left it, too, without that just amount of leisure which the soul demands. Labor brings its own reward, but unrelenting labor ceases to have any reward. Transfiguration never overtakes a man who runs for trains and allows himself only ten minutes for lunch. No, nor a man who works night and day on the architectural plan of St. Peter's !

Michael Angelo's industry had come to be characterized by his contemporaries as "terrible ;" and for all that he had really a simple nature, almost childish in some of its leanings, he was not a man with whom any creature could claim intimacy ; he stood too far off, austere and awful, for any to approach. Popes and emperors wriggled as uneasily in his presence as the meanest commoner, perhaps more so. Gaunt, and gray, and

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grim, the poor old Titan worked away at his creations, which were overpoweringly grand, but never tender ; sublime, but never lovely ; Godlike, as God would be to us all if we approached Him direct, instead of through the gentle Saviour ; unspeakably awesome, but never winsome.

Athwart this personality, of whom, at this time in his life, his chief biographer says, "he was proud and passionate, sensitive, and suspicious, and had grown old in his ways," came Vittoria, whom sorrow had crowned, not stricken ; whom Love had broadened, not confined ; whom shade and shine and summer rains had made ripe, not weather-beaten ; whom power, of place and beauty and grace and intellect, had made tender, not tyrannical ; and it became Indian summer in the life of Michael Angelo. The harvest moon was past, the first frost had rimed his head, the best fruits of his busy life had

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been garnered, when suddenly nature, settling to winter sleep, was enveloped in the golden haze of August, there was balm again in the air's caress, and the sap that had begun to seek the roots in earth leaped in the veins of the grand old tree, the south-fleeing birds halted in their flight, and the earth, that the chill had blighted, was astir with life, astir with a thousand soft voices whispering, "It is summer! It is summer! It is summer!"

"I was born a rough model," he said to her, "and it was for thee to reform and remake me."

Says Grimm, his leading biographer,—

"What a man would Michael Angelo have become had fate led him to know Vittoria in his younger years, and had she met with him then, when she was herself less wearied by years and experience! Such as they now found each other, she could give him nothing but that kindly gentleness with which she softened him, and he ventured to desire nothing but what she could bestow."

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There is much, in record, to tell us unmistakably what Michael Angelo thought of Vittoria; but little, except what we know of Vittoria herself, to tell us what she thought of him. We know that her heart never swerved for an instant from its complete devotion to her husband; that she regarded the great sculptor very highly for his gifts and for his graces of soul; but that she wrote him begging him to write to her less often, and that if she ever addressed him in any tone other than that of a great lady addressing a friend who was also an eminent artist, we have no record of such a letter or poem. We know that he came to see her in her villa on the outskirts of Rome; that they exchanged their poetical works for each other's delight and criticism; that they used to sit together of a Sunday afternoon and listen to some celebrated divine expound the gospel for their private delectation and earnest discussion; and that not

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only the lady herself, to whom he addressed most exquisite sonnets avowing his love, but his friends and contemporaries knew that, as one of them says, "he deeply loved the Marchesana di Pescara, of whose divine mind he was enamored." If he ever hoped anything of this love beyond an exquisite quality of friendship, we do not know, although there is one of his sonnets in which he says :

"I believe that nature is asking back thy charms and commanding them gradually to leave thee, that thy beauty may tarry upon earth, but in the possession of a woman more gracious and less severe than thou art. With thy divine countenance she is adorning a lovely form in the sky, and the God of Love endeavors to give her a compassionate heart ; and he receives all *my* sighs, and gathers up *my* tears, and gives them to him who will love her, as I love thee ! And, happier than I, he will touch her heart perhaps with my sorrows, and she will afford him the favor which is denied me."

He wrote her, too, we know, the following :

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“Yes, hope may with my strong desire keep pace,
And I be undeluded, unbetrayed ;
For if, of our affections none find grace
In sight of Heaven, then wherefore had God
made
The world which we inhabit? Better plea
Love cannot have than that in loving thee.”

Had he been a different type of man, love, coming to him so late in life,—*too* late, some would say,—might have been his undoing, might have embittered him and made him frightful in his Titanic despair. But true love ever works miracles, and always it turns water into wine, —never the other way. And one of its supreme miracles is its strengthening of our feeble hold on immortality. If a man have a faint hope of immortality, Love makes that hope flame into passionate desire, for this little life is all too brief for Love. And if he have been without hope, perhaps because without particular desire, Love kindles that desire and keeps it burning, for Love's tenacity far,

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far outruns the grave ; indeed, great Love can only find the consummation of its hopes There, where

“ There is no sorrow, nor any sighing,
Nor any pain there, nor any dying.”

Michael Angelo had always a hope of the life everlasting,—a grand, prophetic hope of individual salvation, of forgiveness of sins and just reward of toil ; perhaps a hope of rest from his heavy labors ; possibly some anticipation of the glories of the New Jerusalem. Ah, but none of these things make *Heaven !*

When he came to know and love Vittoria, he had a new hope ; he knew, then, what immortality is for ; that it isn't just to perpetuate a poor personality of which we get all too tired here ; that it isn't just to rest an aching head and weary limbs, for the grave would do that ; that it isn't just the dispensation of rewards, for that wouldn't leave the

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best of us much to hope for. But that it's for Love, just for Love ; unto every man according to his need !

That was what Vittoria came to teach him. It was Indian summer with him while she stayed, but Indian summer stays only a day or two ; then winter's chill comes on again, and nature is stripped for winter's tomb, and "the requiem of the snows," after which cometh the Resurrection ! When he met Vittoria, too much of life was behind for her glory to reach back any considerable distance over the toilsome path, and ahead there was but a little way to go. Not for that brief stretch, surely, could she have come into his life. His hope must reach beyond or he must despair. In this spirit we find him writing to Vittoria :

"No mortal object did these eyes behold
When first they met the placid light of thine,
And my soul felt her destiny divine,
And hope of endless peace in me grew bold.

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Heaven-born, the soul a heavenward course
must hold.

Beyond the visible world she soars to seek
(For what delights the sense is false and
weak)

Ideal form the universal mould.

The wise man, I affirm, can find no rest
In that which perishes ; nor will he lend
His heart to aught which doth on time de-
pend.

'Tis sense, unbridled will, and not true love,
That kills the soul. Love betters what is best,
Even here below, but more in heaven above."

In 1547 Vittoria died. One of her
biographers writes :

"We have seen her as a child, hand in hand
with her Francesco, climbing the hills of their
beloved Ischia like their own mountain-goats.
We have followed the pair in their happy studies
under their accomplished sister. We have seen
her as the beautiful, youthful bride, admired and
honored by all beholders ; and as the prudent
and virtuous wife, worthy of the respect of em-
perors, princes, and popes. We have followed
her through great affliction, as the angel of peace
in her family, giving up all her own property

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during the losses of her house ; meekly seeking shelter in those retreats which were always open to the poor and pious, yet never losing the *prestige* and influence due to her family and her talents ; and dedicating her muse without affectation or self-conceit, according as her powers could direct, to the glory of God and the love of virtue ; and at length, having passed through manifold sorrows, the last picture which she presents to us is that touching scene when her true and faithful friend Michael Angelo found himself beside her bed of death ; and when she looked so meek and saint-like, there was such a nobility upon her head, that though he pressed his lips upon her dying hand, he felt for her such an intensity of respect that he did not dare to kiss that cheek and brow for which he felt such a devoted adoration.''

He hung over that death couch in such an agony of grief that he almost lost his senses ; only the majesty of the dying lady kept him calm, for her sake, so that when the last evening was come, and Vittoria whispered to him, "I die. Help me to repeat my last prayer ; I cannot now remember the words," he was able to command himself, and to murmur with her :

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“Grant, I beseech Thee, O Lord, that I may ever worship Thee with such humility of mind as becometh my lowliness, and with such elevation of mind as Thy loftiness demandeth; that I may continually dwell in that fear which Thy justice requireth, and in that hope also which Thy mercy affordeth. May I humble myself before Thee as the All Powerful, and yield myself to Thee as the All Wise, and be turned to Thee as the best and All Perfect One. I entreat, O most Holy Father, that Thy most living flame may so urge me forward that, not being hindered by any mortal imperfections, I may happily and safely again return to Thee.”

Vittoria's voice, which had started with a whisper, faded ere the prayer was done, but her lips kept moving to the last, as the sonorous murmur of the mighty Angelo soothed her into her last sleep. All at once she turned to him as he knelt, holding her cold hand, and a smile trembled on her lips while she murmured some words that he could not distinguish. So passed from earth the spirit of Vittoria Colonna.

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He who loved her so well survived her nineteen years, during which her spirit was always with him, moving him "to gain a fourth crown," as one saith of him, "by the verses that he wrote to her." And always he had but one lament,—that he had never kissed her, save on the hand. Then, at the hoary age of ninety-two, Death made way for the new beginning, and it was Spring again with Michael Angelo, Eternal Spring!

TWO FAMOUS BACHELORS AND THEIR LOVE-STORIES

“I parted from my beloved because there was one thing which I had to tell her. She *questioned* me. She should have known all by sympathy. That I had to tell it her was the difference between us,—the misunderstanding.”

THESE curt sentences from the letter of a man of thirty-five are all that we have to tell us that the love of woman ever entered into the life of one of the most picturesque personalities the world has ever known. In vain we turn the abundant pages of his self-revelations for a further word; in vain we appeal to his biographers, the best of whom were his close personal friends, for more particular enlightenment. But knowing the man, one needs far less than the skill of the scientist who

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constructs a mammoth from a single bone, to read into that brief confession a bitter heart history, the heart history of a man who left the world transfigured for others by a better appreciation, but who set the standards of his idealism so high, exacting from God's creatures the perfections he found in God's universe, that life brought him many disappointments and pitifully few joys.

Ten years before the date of that letter bearing his confession of outraged love this man buried an idolized brother, a man of beautiful spirit whose memory has been held in tender reverence these many years, though he had no other title to remembrance than his lovely disposition. The brother who was left behind grieved for him sincerely, but out of the first fulness of his grief he wrote :

"I do not wish to see John ever again,—I mean him who is dead,—but that other, whom only he would have wished to see, or to be, of whom he was the imperfect representative. For

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we are not what we are, nor do we treat or esteem each other for such, but for what we are capable of being."

Alas! poor, stern idealist. Nothing more exquisitely tender and true has been said of him by all his famous appreciators than dear John Burroughs said when he characterized Thoreau's determined idealism as "whistling to keep his courage up." Walking among the Cohasset rocks and looking at the bodies of scores of poor shipwrecked mariners, Thoreau said, "A man can attend but one funeral in his life, can behold but one corpse." In his life the funeral had been his brother John's, yet he could say, and no doubt truthfully, that he did not wish to see that dear brother again except transfigured from what he had been into what he might become.

Concerning his ideal of love Thoreau wrote :

"I would take my friend out of her low self and set her higher, infinitely higher, and *there*

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know her. But, commonly, men are as much afraid of love as of hate. They have lower engagements. They have near ends to serve. They have not imagination enough to be thus employed about a human being, but must be cooping a barrel, forsooth."

And yet he who had "imagination enough to be thus employed about a human being" parted from his beloved because there was one thing he "had to tell her!" Ah, Henry, Henry! Need had you of whistling to keep your courage up, the courage of such contradictory opinions!

"I love Henry," said one of his friends, "but I cannot like him," and this witty verdict the world has been echoing ever since. Was ever such an odd man? Was ever virtue carried to such a point as to be obnoxious, while a man's faults kept him commended to the tenderness of his fellow-humans? Thoreau had the scantest possible love-story. There is a legend that he loved a girl 'way back in

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his school-teaching days, and that, his brother John loving the same girl, Henry said naught of his feelings, that his brother might have a clear way. There is this legend, and his few sentences on love written to Harrison Blake in 1852, and not even a suggestion of any woman's name save that some few believe that Margaret Fuller, despite her seven years' seniority, may have been she ; one might be pardoned for wondering, at first glance, what there could be in his life of romantic interest. But if ever man lived concerning whose life as influenced by the great passion of his kind we might well have a reasonable or an unreasonable curiosity, that man is Henry David Thoreau, the gaunt ascetic of the woods, the uncompromising anchorite of grim, Puritan New England !

Consider the manner of the man ! Very early in life, so early that we cannot antedate the time, this son of an humble pencil-maker was smitten with a

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vision of self-improvement. We know not what road he may have been travelling, whether to Damascus or in the other direction ; we may be tolerably certain that it was no very frivolous one, for it was in Concord, Massachusetts, then just beginning to be the Athens of America, but for long time a centre of New England influences in their staidest, most self-improving form. The logical outcome of early Puritanism in New England was a frenzy for individual development along intellectual and ethical lines, an unlovely frenzy, in its narrow arrogance, but one to which we owe as much as to its precursor, bigoted religious zeal. Thoreau was the extreme example of this self-improving frenzy, as men like the witch-hunting Mathers were extreme examples of the religious mania. He conceived life to be a vast arena for self-improvement, in which it was " every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," and if he ever read his Bible

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in any part, let alone the part which saith, "He that loveth his life shall lose it," he took no warning therefrom. He mapped out for himself a course of life which he deemed estimable, and thereunto he clave, allowing no one to attract him thence on any pretext whatsoever.

In camp-meetings and the like it is the man who can, or does, lay claim to having been the most frightful sinner whose story of his conversion makes the deepest mark; in the history of that great converter, Love, it is the man or woman whose life has been most bound up in self and selfish aims whose redemption from self unto others, or another, is most challenging to our interest. If the conscientious, excellent Thoreau had ever been smitten in the highway with a vision of splendidly unselfish love, what a tale we should have had to tell! Instead of which he takes rank with that exceeding sorrowful young man who made what Dante called "the Great Re-

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fusal." "I parted from my beloved because there was one thing which I had to tell her." Ah, Henry, Henry! It isn't as if Love had never come to you. By your own confession you are condemned, for you admit that you loved a woman (or that you thought you did!) and that you parted from her because there was something in your mysteriously compounded nature which no one has ever quite understood, that she did not know "by sympathy," for which grave offence you cast her off (think of it! the arrogance! the supreme, astounding ignorance of what love means, what kingly responsibilities it confers with its crown!) and went your self-improving way to the desolate end, the most baffling, most amazing man in history.

If he had been self-seeking in the ordinary, grossly material way, perhaps Thoreau would have been more understandable; but he was the chief of the

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clan of idealists, and he counted no sacrifice great which brought him within nearer reach of that to which he aspired.

“The maiden,” he wrote, “conceals a fairer flower and sweeter fruit than any calyx in the field ; and, if she goes with averted face, confiding in her purity and high resolves, she will make the heavens retrospective, and all nature humbly confess its queen.” Said ever poet tenderer thing than that of maidenhood? And said ever the divinest philosopher truer word than this : “The object of love expands and grows before us to eternity, until it includes all that is lovely, and we become all that can love?” Thoreau conceived, too, the complementary nature of man and woman and the perfection attainable only in union of the two, never in one alone. But his philosophy of love, like his philosophy of life, took too little account of human nature and set too great a stress of expectation on nature of a suprahuman

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sort such as a better philosopher would not look to find save in an Apocalyptic vision of "a new heaven and a new earth."

"Love must be as much a light as a flame," wrote Thoreau, meaning, of course, that it must be as much an inspiration as an aspiration, as much a torch to the feet as a warmth in the breast, as much, to change his metaphor, a goad as a lure. All of which is very true, to be sure, but not all of the truth. Rossetti was far truer when he called love his "light at night," his "shade by noon," and it was partly because he failed to appreciate love's tenderness as well as its intensity that poor Thoreau fell short of the high calling of a lover. Poor zealot! he was upheld in his strenuous life (and oh! that *was* a strenuous life in earnest!) by so fierce a zeal, so hectic a desire, that he almost succeeded in forgetting how good God was to put green valleys and cooling

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streams by the way of the traveller, not to lure him from his progress, but to sustain him towards his journey's end. Thoreau, had he been one of those earlier children of God who travelled across the wilderness to the Promised Land, would have desired of Jehovah that he might travel by night, also, and, perchance, the sooner reach his goal; also, that the grateful pillar of cloud at noon might be a pillar of fire as by night, lest they that journeyed be lured to rest in the shade, and by so much be held back from the river Jordan.

"The *luxury* of affection," he exclaims, "there's the danger. There must be some nerve and heroism in our love, as of a winter morning;" and, "A man's social and spiritual discipline must answer to his corporeal. He must lean on a friend who has a hard breast, as he would lie on a hard bed. He must drink cold water only for his beverage. So he must not hear sweetened and colored

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words, but pure and refreshing truths. He must daily bathe in truth cold as spring water, not warmed by the sympathy of friends." As a reaction against sensuality in love this cold-water ideal has not a little admirableness in it, but people die of cold as well as of fever, and not every one can stand cold plunges; they are positively detrimental to some constitutions, and while cold water and exposure have hardened some, they have brought untold suffering to as many more. And there are rigors enough in proper loving to provide the "nerve and heroism" Thoreau desired, only the proper lover does not need to go about dousing his beloved with truth as cold as spring water in order to provide her and himself with occasion to be rigorous. For love comes hand in hand with the capacity to suffer, and not without one may we have the other. Doubtless Thoreau would have welcomed suffering, in love's name, could he have been sure

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that the suffering was aiding his highest development. But not even suffering aids the highest development of a poor, misguided man who is forever weighing things finite and infinite by what they may avail towards improving his spiritual appearance in the great Last Day. Was it because he never loved that Thoreau never comprehended the Divinity in sacrifice, in compassion, in forgiveness far beyond seventy times seven? Or was it because he did not know how to forgive, to forbear, that he never knew how to love? God knows!

But think of a man in whose hand birds and squirrels of the wildwood would nestle contentedly ; who played adorably with little children ; who loved plants and kittens with an exquisite tenderness ; who could sit on the shores of Fairy Pond in the Walden woods and weave a spell that would draw reverent thousands to the spot to gaze at it for his dear sake and make the straining eyes of other

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thousands see the place, as he saw it, and revere all woodland beauty, all of God's outdoor world as they never had done before ; think of such a man, I say, who was the Creator's interpreter to untold multitudes, and yet who, out of all his desperate effort to drag self-improvement from Nature, never grasped the fundamental truth that the beginning of love is self-insufficiency, that its law is self-sacrifice, and that its course is the self-effacement through which alone we may attain Eternal Life, which is Eternal Love. Could there, when all things are considered, be a more significant chapter to add to these "stories of authors' loves?"

Now, over against this fragmentary love-tale set another, if you please, scarce less fragmentary, but oh, how different !

In the year 1783 there was born, in a house 'way down on Williams Street, in

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what is now almost the extreme lower end of New York City, an eleventh child and eighth son to a worthy couple of Scotch descent, whose staunch sympathy with the cause of the Colonists had, notwithstanding the persecution it brought them from the British soldiers occupying their city, made them ministering angels to the poor patriots who suffered there, in prison and out of it. When the new baby came in April, 1783, the long struggle was nearly over, and Washington was preparing to retire, after years of arduous campaigning, to his Mount Vernon home, whence he was to be called again, some years later, by the people's acclaim, to the chief place in their nation. History does not say whether the Irving baby was the first to be called after the great commander, but it is known that the baby's patriotic mother named her boy for the hero of Valley Forge and Yorktown, and when the boy was six years old and Washington was again in

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New York, this time as head of the new nation, a Scotch nurse of young Irving followed the President into a shop one day and presented the lad to him. "Please, your honor," said Lizzie, "here's a bairn was named after you." "And the grave Virginian," says Charles Dudley Warner, "placed his hand on the boy's head and gave him his blessing. The touch," Mr. Warner goes on to say, "could not have been more efficacious, though it might have lingered longer, if he had known he was propitiating his future biographer."

Now, the father of this young Washington Irving was a righteous man, as righteousness was interpreted in the old Scotch Calvinistic school, but his influence on his family, like that of a good many of his kind, was not exactly benignant, however much it may have made for rectitude, and of all his children there was none who seemed so little like a son of this austere Scotch

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father as the little lad whom he had named for the "grave Virginian." This young Washington was dowered with a quiet drollery which, to his stern father, savored unmistakably of irreligion. Even his mother, whose religious views permitted her a little more toleration of the frailties and foibles of human nature, used to look at her vivacious youngest-born, with his disinclination to study and pious meditation and his strong disposition to light-hearted sociability, and say, "O, Washington! if you were only good!" Many's the time, doubtless, when these worthy parents feared they had done great injustice to the noble Washington in giving his revered name to this scapegrace boy who was so full of zest instead of zeal, who took things as he found them instead of demanding them to conform to his rule of taste or orthodoxy, and who loved the company of companionable fellow-beings so much better than the company of his books.

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He was a delicate youth, inclined to be consumptive, but he had nothing about him of the valetudinarian ; neither physical frailty nor Presbyterian paternity could keep his joyous spirits down, and he went a way of his own, the wisdom of which his after life abundantly made manifest.

When he was sixteen they put him to study law, but there was not an atom of litigiousness in him. When he was travelling, as he was so much of his later life, he endeavored, as he himself said,—

“To be pleased with everything about me, and with the masters, mistresses, and servants of the inns, particularly when I perceive they have ‘all the dispositions in the world’ to serve me ; as Sterne says, ‘It is enough for heaven and ought to be enough for me.’ ”

And this attitude of mind Washington Irving held towards his fellows in other matters than inn-service. If any one was doing as well as he knew how, or

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what he thought right, it was not Irving who had the heart to find fault with him ; which was no material, as any one can see, for the making of a lawyer. Irving's attempt at the study of law, however, was rich in influence on his whole life, for it was as a young clerk and student in the law office of Josiah Ogden Hoffman that Irving came into association with his employer's family, and so into the romance of his life. The Hoffman family, when Irving became acquainted with it, had recently, from being a motherless household, come to be presided over by a second wife, very much Mr. Hoffman's junior, but a woman of exceeding charm and tact, who soon won Irving's affections so completely that he said she was like a sister to him, and certainly no father could have been kinder to him than Mr. Hoffman was. There were five children by the first marriage, four girls and a boy, the two oldest girls being, at the time Irving

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made the family acquaintance, fourteen and twelve years old, respectively. It was the younger of these two, the child Matilda, who was destined to play such a very important part in Washington Irving's life.

In the summer of 1803 Mr. Hoffman inaugurated the extensive travel that was to distinguish Irving's career, by inviting him on an expedition to Ogdensburg, Montreal, and Quebec, a journey of no little undertaking in those days. But it was not efficacious in strengthening Irving's health, and in the spring of the year following, which was the year of his majority, he was sent abroad. As he stepped on the deck of the vessel the captain, it is said, eyed him with a foreboding glance, and said to himself, "There's a chap who will go overboard before we get across." And, in truth, the bright, brave heart of the young voyager after health failed him sorely for a time after he had watched,

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through dim eyes, the widening gap of water shining blue between him and all that he held dear. But his indomitable courage came to the rescue; his cheery spirits returned, and before the ship got across, instead of "going overboard," Irving had acquired a good pair of sea-legs and a sturdier state of health generally.

After two years of travel, which changed him from a sickly youth to a tolerably well and charmingly mature young man, Irving came home to find little Matilda Hoffman grown out of lank girlhood (the "hobbledehoy" age of which is, perhaps, even more unprepossessing than the parallel age in boys, since it marks the gap between so much daintier childhood and so much more exquisite first bloom) into radiant young maidenhood, lovely in itself and lovely in its promise of a splendid maturity. Added to a fair, delicate beauty of person Matilda Hoffman had the charms of

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a wonderfully sweet, pure, gentle spirit and a deliciously playful humor, and her upbringing had been the most cultured that combined love and wisdom could give. She was a maid to wake the tender idealism in almost any man, and particularly was she endowed, with her sweet, sunny temperament, to win and wear the love of Washington Irving. Writing of Matilda, years afterwards, Irving said :

“We saw each other every day, and I became excessively attached to her. Her shyness wore off by degrees. The more I saw of her the more I had reason to admire her. Her mind seemed to unfold leaf by leaf, and every time to discover new sweetness. Nobody knew her so well as I, for she was generally timid and silent ; but I in a manner studied her excellence. Never did I meet with more intuitive rectitude of mind, more native delicacy, more exquisite propriety in word, thought, and action, than in this young creature. I am not exaggerating ; what I say was acknowledged by all who knew her. Her brilliant little sister used to say that people began by admiring



WASHINGTON IRVING

From the portrait by David Wilkie

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her, but ended by loving Matilda. For my part, I idolized her. I felt at times rebuked by her superior delicacy and purity, as if I was a coarse, unworthy being in comparison."

When he had begun to look upon Matilda in this light, Washington laid no other plans for his future than such as might include her, for she loved him in return almost, if not quite, as devotedly as he loved her. Together they talked and planned, building the House of Dreams in which they would live, filling, in prospect, the days that were to come with all the treasures of love and labor, and while they dreamed of a future that was never to be, a present inexpressibly sweet slipped over their heads in its hurry to become the past. Irving's only worry was the world-old need of the young lover for pence, but probably that did not worry him inordinately, for neither he nor Matilda had ever known need of anything, and he probably had, if some of the young

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lover's impatience to wed, a good share, also, of the young lover's implicit faith that very little will suffice where love is so abundant, and that fate, however cruel, can not withhold that little long.

Quite without the faintest suspicion of the degree of success that awaited it, but still very hopefully, Irving began work on "Diedrich Knickerbocker's" History of New York, but while he was engaged in this undertaking, which, after his years of desultory writing, was to make him famous, Matilda Hoffman fell into a decline and died, in the eighteenth year of her age. A cold, of which nothing was thought at first, developed into consumption, and in two months the lovely girl had passed from blooming health to the tomb. During her illness Irving was her constant attendant, hopefully at first, despairingly towards the bitter, painful end. He was the last one she looked upon, and when her sweet eyes closed it verily seemed to her lover

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that the light of his world had gone out. After a time, after months of horrible gloom and despondency, Irving's natural buoyancy and brightness reasserted itself; he went on with his Knickerbocker history and with his literary and social career. Few men have had a life so full of honors, so bright with brilliant social triumphs, so crowned by the love of high and low. Apparently, the shock of his early bereavement had worn away, softened by the pleasureableness of a world in which he ever after seemed to be the favored child of fortune. He never, to the day of his death, mentioned her name, and only once did he commit it even to writing. That was in a letter he wrote to a very intimate friend, on condition that no eyes but hers should ever read it, and that it should be returned to him as soon as she had made herself acquainted with its contents. After his death, in a repository of which he always kept the key, this letter was found, to-

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gether with a lovely miniature of Matilda, a braid of her fair hair, and her Bible and Prayer-Book. For a long time after her death he never slept without these books under his pillow, and until the day he went to join her they were never separated from him in any of his journeyings. In the letter, which was fragmentary, and of which we have quoted a part, Irving tells, very simply, the story of his love for Matilda Hoffman and the shadow her loss cast upon his life. Other than this, as has been said, he never mentioned her. Nearly thirty years after her death he was at her father's house when a niece of Matilda's, having been requested to play for Mr. Irving, in taking her sheet of music from a drawer, accidentally drew forth with it a piece of embroidery. "Washington," said Mr. Hoffman, picking up the faded relic, "this is a piece of poor Matilda's workmanship." "The effect," his nephew and biographer records, "was electric.

TWO FAMOUS BACHELORS

He had been conversing in the sprightliest mood before, and he sunk at once into utter silence, and in a few moments got up and left the house."

In a note-book Irving kept for his own eyes alone there is an entry, made in 1822, thirteen years after Matilda Hoffman's death. It bears no name, but reads :

"She died in the beauty of her youth, and in my memory she will ever be young and beautiful."

When fortune favored him so that he could build a house, the Sunnyside that is now and has long been a Mecca to thousands of pilgrims, he built it exactly as he and she had planned to build their House of Dreams in the long, long ago ; and though she never walked, an actual presence, through its halls and spacious rooms, she lived there none the less, by love's loyalty its mistress. More than fifty years Irving lived after little Matilda Hoffman, and then, on a golden, glori-

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ous afternoon of Indian Summer, after a long life of knightly courtesy and genial charm, he folded the drapery of his couch about him and lay down to pleasant dreams.

He was buried on a little elevation overlooking the Sleepy Hollow he had made famous; and, curiously enough, it was to a hillside overlooking another Sleepy Hollow scarcely less famous that Henry Thoreau was carried to rest two and a half years later. And every year as many thousands visit and add to the cairn of stones that marks the spot where Thoreau's hut stood by the shore of Fairy Pond as ascend the majestic Hudson to see where the Headless Horseman rode, where Rip Van Winkle slept his long sleep, and where the first great American man of letters lies buried. Perhaps it is going far afield to contrast them, the genial, courtly man of the world, polished and urbane to his finger-tips, and the rude, "prickly" pen-

TWO FAMOUS BACHELORS

cil-maker and recluse of the New England woods, but if ever the paradox of life was accented it seems it was in the stories of these two men, the one holding true to a youthful love through fifty years of life, the brightest and most full of lures that one can conceive, and the other, in a life woefully barren of almost every brightness, parting from his beloved because she asked him a question !

THE GREAT ROMANCER'S UNROMANTIC LIFE

IN that incomparably beautiful poem of his, "By the Fireside," in which he celebrates wedded bliss as he has known it, Robert Browning has these significant and much-quoted lines :

"Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
And the little less and what worlds away !"

Who shall say what is "the little more" than mere affection, mere attraction, mere power of adaptability, grace of conformity and virtue of loving forbearance, which makes it possible for one man and woman to cleave together through the severest stress that life can offer, and still keep love intact, unhurt by jar or fret? Or what is "the little

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less" than true love which makes for two not truly mated the brightest, smoothest life unbearably distressful sailing? In divorce courts they call "the little less" "incompatibility," and it sounds like a trifling distress, like a "trumped-up" grievance, like another name for selfishness and ungraciousness and sheer unwillingness to "try." Perhaps that is what it sometimes is, but oftener it is tragedy of the most completely demoralizing kind life can offer. When two hearts beat as one there is no real ill that life can dispense; when two hearts that should beat as one strain and tug at the bonds that hold them together and find no blessedness in them, then there is no really good thing in all the universe. It is a terrible thing, this mating of a man and a woman, if by any chance the mating be otherwise founded than on the truest love! And learned men may write of the analysis of love until there shall be no more

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mystery, but they will never be able to say what is "the little more" which is imperishable, eternal, and "the little less" which crumbles at the first rude touch.

For a man who lived in the glare of publicity through more than thirty years, and who occupied more space in the public prints of his time, and after, than almost any other man of his generation, Dickens left himself, except as recorded in his books, singularly uninterpreted. No recluse he; no Amiel or Thoreau or Fitzgerald. Else we should have known more of him! For there is no man capable of such isolation as the man who lives most among men. Your recluse may be too shy or too proud to enter a drawing-room and reply with easy good-nature to somebody's flippant query, in passing, about his health or his work; but he is interested in the progress of his mind, none the less, and in the development of his soul, and if

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he doesn't have a confidant somewhere that he describes the stages to, with the same vivid interest that Napoleon's state prisoner, the hero of *Picciola*, watched the growth of the tiny plant coming up between the stones of his prison yard, why, then he writes a journal! Self-expression is a necessity to him. But your man of the great world, not so! He writes to his friend of where he dined last night, and his more-than-Jonathan soul-brother doesn't know his convictions about the Trinity, or the precise nature of his hope concerning the life everlasting. A great many men have put Dickens as they knew him on record for us. We are able to tell, on demand, what he looked like, what was the magic quality of his voice, how genial and generous he was, how he loved the theatre and to act, how he walked twelve miles a day, what kind of dinners he served to his friends, what manner of punch he used to brew for them, and a

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thousand such things. But what Dickens thought about the matters of chief importance to us all, what were his secret struggles, his dearest hopes, his bitterest disappointments, we must gather from "between the lines" of his stories, or go unknowing. When one had met him socially in a pleasant way and been invited to his house, and walked a bit with him about Gad's Hill; had, perhaps, seen him at his London club, or, perchance, roamed about Whitechapel with him some night—then, apparently, one knew all one could ever know of Dickens. If anyone ever knew him more intimately than a half-dozen fortunate meetings would allow, that one has never given us aught of him.

He must have had some life that the public did not know, some convictions that even his books did not all-express, some yearnings that were never realized, some joys that not even his closest friends could share. What were they?



CHARLES DICKENS, HIS WIFE, AND HER SISTER
After a pencil drawing by Daniel Maclise, R.A , in 1843

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Who knows? Where and when and how did he fall in love with the lady who became his wife? Who knows? What manner of a lover was he, the young author just coming into the first publicity of success? Who knows? When did the dreadful, creeping horror of disillusionment begin to loom visible on his horizon? Who knows? What was the secret of it? Who knows?

In 1837 Charles Dickens married Miss Katherine Hogarth. Her father, George Hogarth, had been a warm and intimate friend of Sir Walter Scott's and had acted as Scott's confidential adviser in the terrible failure of 1826, which ruined the author of the *Waverley* novels. Coming to London, Mr. Hogarth became musical and dramatic critic on the *Morning Chronicle*, on which paper both John Dickens and his son Charles were employed. In the Hogarth household there were three daughters, each of whom was destined to exercise a pe-

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cular influence in the life of the great novelist. How Dickens came to choose Miss Katherine from among the three for his wife there is no least thing in any written record to tell us. Certainly each of the others seems to have been to him more than the lady who was his wife,—the older of the two girls in an ideal, romantic way, the younger in a practically helpful way,—and Dickens paid full tribute of appreciation to both.

Of his courtship we know absolutely nothing. In his published letters there are but two very brief notes addressed to Miss Hogarth before their marriage, and these are of the most matter-of-fact character and quite without interest. Nowhere, in any life of his obtainable, does the episode of his marriage elicit more than a paragraph in passing. "About this time," remark the biographers, casually, "Dickens married Miss Hogarth, and soon after went to live in Doughty Street, near the Foundling Hospital."

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So much, of the romance of Charles Dickens's life!

Thereafter we read now and again of Mrs. Dickens accompanying him somewhere, of some one meeting her in their home and taking the trouble to describe her in a paragraph. In those curiously uninteresting volumes, Dickens's letters, there is now and then a letter addressed by the celebrated author, on his travels, to the *hausfrau* at home—very much the kind of letter an unimaginative and rather phlegmatic pork merchant, not illiterate, might address to the good dame of his household: "Yesterday I went thus and so, and to-day it rains, and the hotel here is quite poor, the beds damp, and the bread soggy. I shall be glad to be at home again; kiss the children for me;" and, under later dates, others much like this, except with respect to the special delinquencies of the other hotels.

There were little Dickenses—plenty

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of them!—and one might suppose that Mrs. Dickens was so absorbed in her nursery as to be dead to any other world; but the real mother of Dickens's children seems to have been, early as well as later in their lives, Miss Georgina Hogarth, Mrs. Dickens's youngest sister, who took up nominally, what she had long held actually, the management of Dickens's home when Mrs. Dickens left it, in 1858, never to return.

The elder of Mrs. Dickens's two sisters (both of whom were younger than she) died very suddenly soon after the marriage of Dickens and Miss Katherine Hogarth. Dickens was deeply, tenderly attached to her and mourned her passionately. The original preface to *Pickwick Papers* contained this paragraph:

“The following pages have been written from time to time, almost as the periodical occasion arose. Having been written for the most part in the society of a very dear young friend who is now no more, they are connected in the author's

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mind at once with the happiest period of his life, and with its saddest and most severe affliction."

"Waking or sleeping," he wrote to Mrs. Hogarth a few months after Mary's death, "I have never lost the recollection of our hard sorrow, and I never will." In his diary he wrote, at the beginning of a new year :

"If she was with me now—the same winning, happy, amiable companion, sympathizing with all my thoughts and feelings more than any one I ever knew did or will—I think I should have nothing to wish for but a continuance of such happiness."

"I dreamed of her every night and day for weeks," he writes in another place, shortly after this terrible affliction fell upon him, "and always with a kind of quiet happiness which became so pleasant to me that I never lay down to sleep without the hope of the vision returning." The year before he died Dickens wrote to a friend :

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“She is so much in my thoughts at all times, especially when I am successful, that the recollection of her is an essential part of my being, and is as inseparable from my existence as the beating of my heart is.”

And this after more than thirty years ! Dickens was not without his idealistic love, even though it was not in the mother of his children that he found it, but in one who, but for some inexplicable fatality of choice (as it seems to us) might have been to him all that his soul craved.

Miss Georgina Hogarth made her home with the Dickenses from the beginning of their married life, and became to her brother-in-law, by her never-failing help in all times of need, “the best and truest friend ever man had,” to quote from his description of her in his last will and testament. To her he bequeathed, besides a very handsome legacy in money, all his personal belongings and jewelry, all “the little, familiar objects” from his writing-table and room, and all his private



Gurney, 1868

CHARLES DICKENS

From a portrait taken in America by Gurney, in 1868

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papers of every nature. She was made executrix of his will, with John Forster as co-executor, and Dickens charged his children solemnly that they remember always

“how much they owe to said Georgina Hogarth, and never be wanting in grateful and affectionate attachment to her, for they know well that she has been through all the stages of their growth and progress their ever-useful, self-denying and devoted friend.”

This will was written in the same year in which Dickens wrote of Mary Hogarth, then dead some thirty-two years, that the recollection of her was as essential a part of his being, and as inseparable from his existence as the beating of his heart. Somehow, between them, these two women, each of them in her separate way, one continually beckoning to him from the spirit world, the other unfailingly staying and comforting him step by step on his journey through this world, seem to have ministered to him most potently

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of all the influences of his life. Another woman, own sister to these, faded out of his life almost altogether—except as his generous checks were made payable to her—twelve years before he died, but not until many years after she had ceased (if, indeed, she had ever begun) to be anything to him save “the little less” than a true mate for whom, whether in blindness or in carelessness, he had bartered his birthright to a perfect union.

God knows why he did it! Or perhaps God does *not* know, cannot understand, why so often, so terribly often, men and women accept “the little less” which is such “worlds away” from the real gift of God they might have if they would but reach out trusting hands and demand the best.

Did Dickens forswear “the little more” that would have glorified his life for a more delicate profile, one wonders, for a more rounded chin, for a trick of speech or dress or parlor accomplishment? Or

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did he cheat himself with that perennial trap-device for fools—the idea that when the time seemed ripe for him to marry, one girl was as good as another, given a few apparent essentials of feminine charm and docility? One wonders. And what was the length and bitterness of his struggle before he owned to himself the irreparableness of his mistake? One would give much to know. Did he wake up some morning to a “grayness” of outlook never again to be tinged with rose for him—wake up to find his little children in their innocent lovingness mocking reminders of his misery, to taste his great success and find it savorless, to remember the plaudits of the world and count them noise, mere noise, because the enchantment was gone out of life, the sweetness out of triumph? Or did he relinquish to-day some dear desire, to-morrow some fond ideal, give up inch by inch “the substance of things hoped for,” until

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not even a shadow remained? But whether one retreat, fighting, inch by inch to the dead-wall of despair, or wake up and find one's self robbed, what matter? The end is the same if Love be the loss, for the rest of the way is without hope, practically ; it is a mere "making the best of things," a dreary business where love is not, a cheery business where love abideth.

Poor Dickens ! Fortune lavished her brightest smiles on him, the great of earth courted him, the humble of earth adored him (far better !), and through it all he worked as if there were no joy in rest, no pleasure apart from labor.

Every heart in England and almost, if not quite, every heart in America ached as with the loss of a dear personal friend that June day in 1870 when the word went abroad that Dickens was dead. Few men have ever lived who have endeared themselves to so many millions, added to the intimate, enliven-

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ing acquaintance of the world so many imperishable creatures of fancy, abrogated so many harsh customs and unchristian abuses. Was he a triumphant man? One does not so conceive him. Facing death he committed his soul "to the mercy of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." What did he hope, this man to whom life had brought so much, of that country wherein it is promised each of us we shall be satisfied? Ah! if one could know!

THE DREAM CHILDREN OF CHARLES LAMB

“**T**O renounce, where that shall be necessary, and not to be embittered,” was one of the requirements of Stevenson’s great summing up of the tests of “all a man’s fortitude and delicacy.” “To renounce, where that shall be necessary, and not to be embittered,”—well ! it is only the conquerors, not of life but in life, who do so.

On Monday, September 26, 1796, the London *Times* contained the following news item :

“On Friday afternoon, the coroner and a jury sat on the body of a lady in the neighborhood of Holborn, who died in consequence of a wound from her daughter the preceding day. It appeared by the evidence adduced, that while the family

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were preparing for dinner the young lady seized a case-knife lying on the table, and in a menacing manner pursued a little girl, her apprentice, round the room. On the calls of her infirm mother to forbear, she renounced her first object, and with loud shrieks, approached her parent. The child, by her cries, quickly brought up the landlord of the house, but too late. The dreadful scene presented to him the mother lifeless, pierced to the heart, on a chair, her daughter yet wildly standing over her with the fatal knife, and the old man, her father, weeping at her side, himself bleeding at the forehead from the effects of a severe blow he received from one of the forks she had been madly hurling about the room.

“For a few days prior to this the family had observed some symptoms of insanity in her, which had so much increased on the Wednesday evening that her brother early the next morning went to Dr. Pitcairn, but that gentleman was not at home.

“It seems the young lady had once before been deranged. The jury, of course, brought in their verdict ‘Lunacy.’ ”

On the day following the appearance of this account, in so marked contrast to our modern journalistic methods, the

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brother mentioned, a youth of twenty-one, wrote as follows to his dearest friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had been his school-fellow at Christ's Hospital and who remained till death, despite misunderstandings and quarrels, Lamb's best-loved confidant :

“ My dearest Friend,—White, or some of my friends, or the public papers, by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines: My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of our mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, whence I fear she must be moved to a hospital. God has preserved to me my senses,—I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe very sound. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me ‘the former things are passed away,’ and I have something more to do than to feel.

God Almighty have us well in his keeping.

C. LAMB.”



CHARLES LAMB
From the portrait by H. Meyer

THE DREAM CHILDREN OF CHARLES LAMB

In the closing weeks of the year before, Charles Lamb had himself been confined for a season in a madhouse, at Hoxton, and after he was released he wrote to Coleridge :

“It may convince you of my regards for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy.”

No more mention than this does he make of the second great renunciation in that long life of continual self-denial, without bitterness, which is one of the sweetest, most tenderly cherished pages in all human history ; but the circumstances were something like this :

In November, 1789, Lamb, who was then near the completion of his fourteenth year, relinquished, with the cheerfulness even then so characteristic of him, all hope of university training ; he yearned after the university life and the university

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education with an utter longing such as perhaps few men have felt, but he saw it was not for him, and without a murmur he bade his school-fellows godspeed as they faced thitherward, and then set himself resolutely to a lifetime's slavery to the "desk's dull wood," becoming first an assistant to his older brother, John, in the South Sea House, and later obtaining an appointment in the accountant's office of the East India Company. His father was old and rapidly sinking into dotage, his mother suffered under an infirmity which deprived her of the use of her limbs, and the little family was maintained by Charles's slender salary, eked out by a tiny annuity paid the father by his old employer, by the earnings of Mary's needle, and the bit of board paid by an old maiden aunt who resided with them. It was bare existence. Mary was taxed to her uttermost endurance by her vigilant attendance on the wants of the three old

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people in her care, comforts were few, and nightly Charles came home from the monotonous tyranny of figures to the atmosphere of greatest depression and least cheer imaginable.

But this was not the worst. In the neighborhood of Islington there was a "fair-haired maid" who took strong hold on the poetic boyish fancy of the poor young accountant struggling under his heavy load of care. She represented to him all that was winsome and sweet in maidenhood, and that was most yearningly desirable in a companion, a wife. He wrote verses to her ; he dreamed for a brief, brief little space the honey-sweet dreams of youth in love ; his poetic soul gave him deep yearnings and bright flashes of vision of what "might be ;" but he put them from him, as he put away his dreams of the stately spires of Oxford or the "immemorial elms" of Cambridge ; put it away forever, and was not embittered, though we have every good

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reason to suppose that it was the strain of this second renunciation which landed him for those six weeks in the madhouse at Hoxton. How he kept his senses during those months following his mother's death one can never understand, nor how, all his brave, sweet life through, he bore so much and never again exhibited even a tendency to return to insanity.

After some months, perhaps quite a year, death came again to the cheerless lodging in Little Queen Street and released the poor old imbecile father. With his life the annuity paid him ceased, and Lamb and the old aunt lived on in the haunted, dreary rooms with an aged servant to depend on, as as much as she cared for, them. Mary was still in the asylum, but perfectly sensible and calm, and Charles was passionately desirous of obtaining her liberty. Her brother John, secure in a comfortable home and position, and of

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no mind to take on himself, in any wise, the troubles of his kinsfolk, opposed her release with all his might; but Charles, twenty-two years in actual age, though already old in care and renunciation, went before the authorities and solemnly engaged to be responsible for life for the good conduct of his poor sister if handed over to his care. With an income of about £100 a year and scant prospects of preferment in office, this boy, who had already behind him the multitudinous and stern triumphs of an old, old hero, pledged himself to the safe keeping of the afflicted woman whom only, henceforth, he had to love with all the fervor of a heart capable as few hearts have been of mighty love and utter loyalty.

Full of love and of hope, Lamb took home to the dreary lodgings that had seen so much woe the dear sister from whom he fondly hoped to keep all knowledge of the awful moment when her own hand had made her motherless.

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For a while things went well enough ; but soon the old aunt sickened and died, and Mary, worn out by attendance and anxiety, again fell a prey to madness, Charles leading her tearfully back to the asylum and surrendering her again into custody. Again, after a little, he begged her out, and again, nursing the last of her aged dependants, the old servant, on her death-bed, Mary gave way, and once more brother and sister, hand in hand, both weeping bitterly, wended their way to the madhouse, the brother returning thence alone—all, all alone, for the first time in his care-en-cumbered life. The stillness, the emptiness, the ghosts of tragic days might well have driven him, too, mad, but a much harder trial was held for him. Not his the "luxury of going mad ;" his only the horror of staying sane and wondering what minute, under the frightful strain, reason would cease to torment, and give way.



MARY LAMB

From the portrait by F. S. Cary

THE DREAM CHILDREN OF CHARLES LAMB

Shy, awkward, stuttering, by his own supreme power of renunciation shorn of all that ordinarily makes life worth living, hard driven by petty, exacting labor, harassed by the worst of cares, deprived of the educational aids to expression so piteously yearned for, alternately all alone in the world or watching apprehensively over this idolized sister, poor, unsought, rather inarticulate save with his pen, and even with that counted no success in his time, a mere dabbler in literature as an anodyne for pain, this man of many sorrows must wonder to-day (if he knows, as we think he must) to find himself the most tenderly beloved of all the men who ever lived and wrote and left the world richer by such contagion of love and cheer and sweet humor as have never been equalled—never!

In the loneliness of some day when, perhaps, he had just been with poor Mary on one of her sad journeys to the

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madhouse and had returned thence to his cold, cheerless lodging, Lamb sat him down and wrote *Dream Children: A Reverie*. Child-heart that he was, he "played pretend." He cozened himself into the sweet belief, for a half-hour, that nothing in his life was as it really was, but that years ago, in the fulness of youth and love, he had married his "fair Alice," and her little Alice and her son John stood by him and listened to his tales of a youth all fairy sweetness and a maturity all crowned with love.

"When suddenly turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding and still receding, till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which without speech strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: 'We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father.

THE DREAM CHILDREN OF CHARLES LAMB

We are nothing, less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence and a name.' And immediately awakening, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair where I had fallen asleep."

Yes ; but some day, so dreaming, did he not, dear heart, wake to find it all a reality? Else what is Paradise?

END OF VOLUME I.

